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THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE"
"THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND
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THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR HIS OWN.

Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.—John xiii. 1.

1. THOSE who study St. John's Gospel critically find it divided into sections. As many as seven divisions are made out by some. In a simpler way the Gospel divides itself into two. The first division, containing twelve chapters, relates how Jesus wrought the works of Him that sent Him while it was day. The second, beginning with this thirteenth chapter, describes His departure. The keynote of the first section of the second part is this, that "having loved his own, he loved them unto the end."

¶ The latter half of St. John's Gospel, which begins with these words, is the Holy of Holies of the New Testament. Nowhere else do the blended lights of our Lord's superhuman dignity and human tenderness shine with such lambent brightness. Nowhere else is His speech at once so simple and so deep. Nowhere else have we the heart of God so unveiled to us. On no other page, even of the Bible, have so many eyes, glistening with tears, looked and had the tears dried. The immortal words which Christ spoke in that upper chamber are His highest self-revelation in speech, even as the Cross to which they led up is His most perfect self-revelation in act.[1]

2. The explanation of all that follows is in these words: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." It is the key to His action of washing their feet, to give them a proof of His enduring love. It is the explanation of all His previous life, and of the death He is to accomplish soon. St. John gives us in these words the right point of view for understanding the true significance of all that follows and of all that went before. He was possessed and governed by love, the Apostle declares. If we do not see this, we see nothing and

[1] **A. Maclaren.**

understand nothing. All that Jesus did and was, was the fruit of love. He had loved His own which were in the world, and now He loves them unto the end. A Latin proverb says that the end crowns the work. When the Saviour said on the Cross, "It is finished," His end of sacrifice was the carrying forward and culmination of all His grace. This supreme act is the summit and crown of all His love.

I.

Love the Explanation.

St. John, looking back reflectively, sees that only love explains all that Jesus did that night. He remembers how the disciples, as they came to the Upper Room, were heated with false ambitions, and were squabbling about precedence, so angry with and jealous of each other that none of them would perform the usual office of taking off each other's sandals and washing the feet. There had arisen a contention which of them would be accounted greatest, and no one would lower his pretensions by undertaking a menial task and so confess himself the servant of all. It was in a temper of self-assertion and in a mood of resentment that they entered the Upper Room. How can they listen to all the deep things of the Spirit which their Master desires to tell them so long as such passions are in their hearts? That Jesus should humble Himself to teach them the lesson He did must have brought a bitter humiliation to them. To St. John it was a proof of enduring love, far more remarkable on looking back on it than it could have been at the time. For the shadow of the Cross was on Christ's heart, the betrayal, the desolation, the trial, the crucifixion, the crisis of His whole cause and Kingdom. The Apostle sees on looking back that only perfect love could have done what Jesus did then, as He turned from His own thoughts and bent to the menial task. He had loved them—that was plain,—and nothing had tired out that love, not their folly or thoughtlessness or selfishness. He came to minister, to serve, and He went on serving unto the end. Their childish pettiness on this occasion only gave a gentler pity to His love and a sweeter and more patient tone to His speech. He does not give up loving because He sees they are so unworthy

of His love. The shadow of their unloveliness only throws into keener brilliance the light of His love.

¶ How many kinds, measures, and tones of meaning are comprehended in this word "Love"! So it is in common language, and even when one specific use of it has been excluded. So it is in Scripture. There is a difference in the love of God as God, of Jesus Christ as Saviour, of our friends and relations, of our neighbours, of our enemies, of our people, of our kind. It is all love, but with what various combinations of idea and measures of feeling! So on the Divine side. The Father loved the Son; God loved the world; Jesus loved His own (in that common character); He loved them as individuals; He "loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus," and there was one disciple "whom Jesus loved." We are all sensible of the differences of impression conveyed in these connexions, though it would be vain to attempt to describe them.[1]

1. *Its Manifestation.*—It is love that makes the man, builds the character, saves the city, and redeems the world. It is love that is the strongest and most potent motive of all in the action and speech of Jesus Christ. And here it is central to St. John's statement, for Jesus "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." It is the key to all that follows right to the end of the section, which closes with the seventeenth chapter. That love is here, not as a lane of light going through these speeches, but as the sun in his full midday glory shining over the whole of the acts of Jesus Christ, and through the words that come from His lips. It is in love that He washes His disciples' feet, as though He were the menial and they the master, so that He may impress upon their minds the sublimity of lowly service, of humble ministry for the salvation of the world. It is love that speaks out to this little band gathered at this Supper, and says, "The one badge which you are always to wear, by which you are always to be recognized everywhere, is love to one another." It is love that says, Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God; believe in Me; believe in heaven; believe in the infinite power of the Spirit. It is love that tells upon these disciples, and binds them in love to Him, and makes them one with Him as the branch with the Vine. It is love that assures these followers of His, that though

[1] T. D. Bernard, *The Central Teaching of Jesus Christ*, 35.

He will soon be received out of their sight, and they will no longer be able to grasp His hand, still another Comforter will come and be with them, and lead them into the sphere of all truth. And it is love that breathes out the great intercessory prayer, that these disciples may be kept from the evil of the world, and enabled to realize their unity with Him and with the Father; "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end," to the last, to the uttermost, till everything was finished. And at once He proceeded to wash their feet that He might show the reality and the quality of His love.

¶ I was once talking with a friend about a man who had achieved great distinction, but who had somehow missed the love of his fellowmen, and my friend said: "The trouble with that man is that he cannot bow himself." He had achieved integrity, rectitude, self-respect, but he had not attained that final grace of character which made him able to stoop and serve.[1]

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd any thing.

"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here"
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee."
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste My meat."
So I did sit and eat.[2]

2. *Its Effect.*—It was in the Upper Room that Jesus bound the hearts of His disciples to Himself for ever. This section of

[1] F. G. Peabody, *Mornings in the College Chapel*, 2nd Ser., 49.
[2] G. Herbert.

St. John's Gospel has been described as "the development of faith in the disciples." The narrative takes a new departure, retiring within the little company of the Twelve. The close is as clearly marked as the beginning. The precious scene which is here spread before us becomes more striking from the lurid background which it finds in the temple and the streets of Jerusalem. The growth of faith within—what a contrast to the growth of unbelief without! Here are the Eleven with Jesus—there are the scribes, the priests, the Pharisees. Outside, events are leading to the cross; inside, they are preparing for Pentecost and the salvation of the world. The last word the disciples spoke in that room shows how their faith had grown since they sat down with Jesus to the Paschal Feast: "Now know we that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God." Every fear and doubt has been driven out. Christ is all and in all to the disciples. After such a voluntary tribute, there was nothing left for Jesus save to bow with them at the feet of God. The world outside lies heavy on His heart; but its unbelief adds a new touch of gratitude and thanksgiving for the spirit of those who are with Him in the Upper Room. "O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me."

¶ If we want to kill our pride we must burn it in the consuming fire of shame. The pride of these twelve men melted away in the fierce heat of their own shame. Let a man know that Jesus is stooping at his feet with the basin, and the fire of shame will be kindled. For that is always the attitude of our Master towards us. "He loved me and gave himself for me." And we may alter the tense of that great sentence, turning it from the past into the present, and it is equally and unutterably true, "He loves me, and gives himself for me." It is when a man realizes that supreme sacrifice of our Lord that all his petty pride and vanity shrivel away. It was when St. Paul felt the Master at his feet that there came from his bursting heart the great and zealous ambition, "I count all things but loss that I may win Christ." Christ changes our ideas of sovereignty; He takes the dispositions we had resented, and henceforth they are crowns. The servile virtues are lifted into heavenly places in Christ. Humility, obedience, service—all shine with the radiant distinction of the Lord. "The Son of man came not to be

ministered unto, but to minister." The washing of weary feet is a ministry ever needed in the dusty ways of human life; and if that ministry is to become a ready and spontaneous affection we need the fulness of the Holy Ghost.[1]

They thought to heal me, when they cast
  Reproving glances towards me;
As if their proud contempt could shrive me
Of my sin, or scorn could drive me
  E'er to mend my ways,—
  Liefer end my days!

They thought to lift me, when they held
  A pattern pure above me;
As if to gaze on cold perfection
Ever could give new direction
  To my wrecked desires;
  Or awake new fires!

Then came a voice of cadence sweet,
  And winning tones that touched me,
"I love thee, friend"—and, deeply welling
In my soul, and all-compelling,
  Love leapt at the sound;
  Life and Heaven I found![2]

II.

Love for His Own.

1. In regard to the love of Christ, the one distinction to be recognized here is that between His love to the world and His love to His own which are in the world. The love of Christ to the world is love to men as such: He being the head of the creation, which through Him came into being, and of the race of whose reason and conscience, He, as the Eternal Word, is the author, and with which, in taking flesh, He has assumed a natural and universal kindred. It is a love of compassion and benevolence and Divine desire, in which He gives Himself for all, and dies for all, and provides reconciliation, and preaches peace, and seeks the lost, and waits to be gracious, and would

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The Examiner*, April 12, 1906, p. 348.
[2] T. Crawford, *Horæ Serenæ*, 18.

"draw all men unto himself." But the love for His own which are in the world is no longer mere desire and endeavour. It is being realized in results intended. It has found response, and is generating a reciprocal life, and has the joy of exercising an attraction which is felt and owned, and of carrying on a work which imparts blessing and tends to perfection, restoring men to God through relations with Him who has loved them, relations which are spiritual, intimate, and eternal. Such love enters into the inner life of the beloved, and finds occasion for its exercise in their needs and dangers, their infirmities and failings. It delights to comfort and protect, to cleanse, to heal, to strengthen, to exalt. It is an inexhaustible fountain of gifts; it is the "love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Yet, being true love, it is not content to give. It desires also to receive. It would be understood and trusted and confided in. It invites sympathy and fellowship. It claims reciprocity of affection. It would not only love, but be loved. Even in these last respects this is the character of the love which these chapters disclose. For our sake they disclose it, teaching us how He once loved, and by consequence how He ever loves, how He now loves, His own which are in the world.

¶ Is there any reason why we should be afraid of saying that the universal love of Jesus Christ, which gathers into His bosom all mankind, does fall with special tenderness and sweetness upon those who have made Him theirs and have surrendered themselves to be His? Surely it must be that He has special nearness to those who love Him; surely it is reasonable that He should have special delight in those who try to resemble Him; surely it is only what one might expect of Him that He should in a special manner honour the drafts, so to speak, of those who have confidence in Him, and are building their whole lives upon Him. Surely, because the sun shines down upon dunghills and all impurities, that is no reason why it should not lie with special brightness on the polished mirror that reflects its lustre. Surely, because Jesus Christ loves the publicans and the harlots and the outcasts and the sinners, that is no reason why He should not bend with special tenderness over those who, loving Him, try to serve Him, and have set all their hopes upon Him. The rainbow strides across the sky, but there is a rainbow in every little dewdrop that hangs glistening on the blades of grass.[1]

[1] A. Maclaren.

¶ True charity or love in its noblest forms is in some measure like the Divine love. In some ways it is ubiquitous, though in other ways it seems condensed or concentrated. As Dr. Martineau said concerning the omnipresence of God and His *special* presence in the soul of Christ, no distant star *missed* Him the more because He shone with such peculiar brightness in the fair glory of that pure life.[1]

¶ Perhaps we do not yet know what the word "to love" means. There are within us lives in which we love unconsciously. To love thus means more than to have pity, to make inner sacrifices, to be anxious to help and give happiness; it is a thing that lies a thousand fathoms deeper, where our softest, swiftest, strongest words cannot reach it.[2]

2. He loved His own *which were in the world.* For He must leave them in the world. For many years after He has reached His glory, they will be exposed to pain and peril. So, in His tender pitying love for "his own," He devoted His last free hours of life to their instruction and warning, and comfort. In the majesty of His humility the Only-begotten Son of God washed the disciples' feet, even those of the traitor Judas. He instituted the blessed Sacrament of the Supper as the memorial of His love. He gave the disciples the promise of the Comforter. He left them the legacy of His own peace. He poured out in their behalf as well as His own the powerful pleadings of His great intercessory prayer.

¶ The emigrant who, after years of absence in a foreign land, is at length on the eve of returning to his native shores, may be excused if he allows the new ties formed in the strange country to slacken, seeing he has the near prospect of looking again upon the old familiar scenes, and upon the faces of father and mother, in his childhood's home. But who can conceive the attractions and associations of the Redeemer's home? In going back to God He was returning to the glories of heaven, to the throne of the universe, to the companionships of eternity, to the bosom of the Father! And yet, in this same glorious hour, so far from being self-absorbed, His love begins to burn with irrepressible ardour for "his own," whom He is to leave behind.[3]

[1] A. H. Craufurd, *The Religion and Ethics of Tolstoy*, 74.
[2] M. Maeterlinck, *The Treasure of the Humble*, 162.
[3] C. Jerdan, *For the Lord's Table*, 36.

III.

Love to the End.

"Unto the end"—this is the measure of the Saviour's love, and the word does not mean merely so long as He lived, but also in the highest degree, to the very uttermost. It is not merely a measure of time, but a measure of the quality and passion of love. Not merely to the end of His life did He love, but to the *end of love*, to the limits of a limitless love. There are no conditions, no barriers, no limits. Place the end where you will or how you will, draw the circumference as wide as you may, He fills the whole circle with His love. He loves unto the end, that is its quality. To the end of His life, the end of our life, the end of the world, the end of time—more than that, it is to the end of an endless thing, to the extreme limit of the limitless, the very end of love itself. It does not mean merely that He loved till He died, not merely that He loved in the highest degree; it includes all that and more. It means that He loved through all that love brought Him, the humiliation, the suffering, the sorrowful way, the Cross. Love to the end expresses the height and depth and breadth and strength of love; and that was how He loved and loves. Shakespeare, in the cxvi. Sonnet, gives this enduring quality as characteristic of the highest and best love:

> Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove: . . .
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

¶ Many good commentators prefer to read the last words of the text, "He loved them unto the *uttermost*," rather than "unto the *end*"—so taking them to express the depth and degree rather than the permanence and perpetuity of our Lord's love. And that seems to me to be far the worthier and the nobler meaning, as well as the one which is borne out by the usual signification of the expression in other Greek authors. It is much to know that the emotions of these last moments did not interrupt Christ's love. It is even more to know that in some sense they perfected it, giving even a greater vitality to its tenderness, and a more precious sweetness to its manifestations. So understood, the

words explain for us why it was that in the sanctity of the Upper Room there ensued the marvellous act of the feet-washing, the marvellous discourses which follow, and the climax of all, that High-priestly prayer. They give utterance to a love which Christ's consciousness at that solemn hour tended to sharpen and to deepen.[1]

1. *He has loved His own all the way.*—Let us interpret all our experience by this great fact, and the whole path is illumined and the meaning of much that was dark is made clear. We will not judge God by every little unexplained corner of the road, but by the whole long stretch of His providence. While we were in the dark patches we did not understand and sometimes doubted, but on looking back over all the way we see it to be ruled and governed and directed by love. The disciples might sometimes think they had reason to doubt the Master's perfect love. At this very time they might ask, why if He loved them they should be bereaved, why they were to be left as sheep among the wolves? His dealing with them was indeed marked by love, but was it all love and only love and love unto the very end? St. John saw afterwards that it was so, from first to last—indeed there was no last.

¶ We sometimes do not understand the way of His love. Some passages and events puzzle us and alarm our faith. We cannot explain them on the hypothesis that they are the result of absolute love. Why should certain things happen that we dreaded, and other things be denied us that we desired? As George Bowen says in his beautiful book, *Love Revealed*: "He takes extraordinary liberties with us. Believing in His love and having our own particular conception of what love is, we settle in our minds that a certain contingency can never by any possibility be allowed to come to pass. Against everything else we prepare—not against that. We feel that it would be an unpardonable outrage to His most holy nature to suppose for a moment that He should suffer *that* contingency to come to pass. And yet that is the very thing that He brings to pass. We had boasted of the love of Jesus among our neighbours and told them that He would not suffer our brother Lazarus to die, but would assuredly come and restore him to health; and lo! Lazarus dies and is buried, and it is much if our sense of the love of Jesus be not buried with him. He takes what seem to us frightful liberties with our sensibilities and with our trust." Well, St.

[1] A. Maclaren.

John did not understand all that was taking place that night in the Upper Room, and all that happened so soon after, but his final testimony afterwards was, as the final explanation of it all: "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end."[1]

2. *And He loves His own still.*—In the glory, when He reached it, He poured out the same loving heart; and to-day He looks down upon us with the same face that bent over the table in the Upper Room, and the same tenderness flows to us. When St. John saw his Master next, after His Ascension, amidst the glories of the vision in his rocky Patmos, though His face was as the sun shineth in his strength, it was the old face. Though His hand bore the stars in a cluster, it was the hand that had been pierced with the nails. Though the breast was girded with the golden girdle of sovereignty and of priesthood, it was the breast on which St. John's happy head had lain; and though the voice was "as the sound of many waters," it soothed itself to a murmur, gentle as that with which the tideless sea about him rippled upon the silvery sand when He said, "Fear not . . . I am the first and the last." Knowing that He goes to the Father, He loves to the uttermost, and being with the Father, He still so loves.

¶ Having loved, He loves. Because He had been a certain thing, therefore He is and He shall be that same. That is an argument that implies Divinity. About nothing human can we say that because it has been therefore it shall be. Alas! about much that is human we have to say the converse, that because it has been, therefore it will cease to be. And though they are few and they are poor who have had no experience in their lives of human hearts whose love in the past has been such that it manifestly is for ever, yet we cannot with the same absolute confidence say about one another, even about the dearest, "Having loved, he loves." But we can say so about Christ. There is no exhaustion in that great stream which pours out from His heart, no diminution in its flow.

"He loved His own unto the end,"
  And asked their love;
He said, "I call you each My friend,
And not My servant; and I send
  One from above,
Who shall reveal such grace and truth to you
As in My sojourn here ye never knew."

[1] H. Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, 199.

"But why depart?" they cry, "why will
To leave us here?
Thou sayest that Thou dost love us still;
Can it be love if thus Thou fill
Our cup of fear?
O Master, Master, should'st Thou now depart
All sorrow needs must overwhelm our heart."

Yet it is love: He said "I go;
For could I stay,
Your earth-bound thoughts would never know
Love's fullest mysteries, which flow
From Me alway;
My human heart might linger with you yet,
But now affections must on heaven be set.

"You could not know Me more, unless
My Spirit came
And taught the ways of righteousness,
How sin and judgment to confess,
How learn to blame
All clinging to inferior things of earth,
Blind to the glory of your heavenly birth.

"My peace I leave with you, but not
As this world gives;
My Spirit comes to you, yet what
He teaches shows no earthly lot:
He ever lives,
The world must learn. I hear the Father's call
Away from earth!—Awhile I leave you all.

"Arise! let us go hence." He rose,
And, as He spake,
Calmly He moved, as one who knows
The coming onset of his foes.
The night winds shake
With distant sounds, as through the olive grove
"Let us depart" is echoed from above.[1]

[1] William Josiah Irons.

Regeneration and Renewal.

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REGENERATION AND RENEWAL.

Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.—John xiii. 10.

1. THIS answer of our Lord to Peter has naturally a double meaning. It is both literal and figurative. Just as one who, having bathed in the morning, considers himself clean and does not repeat this total ablution at meal-time, but is contented with washing his feet on entering, to remove such accidental defilement as he may have contracted by the way; so he who, by sincerely attaching himself to Christ, has found pardon for his sins, needs nothing else than a daily and continual purification from the moral defilement of which he becomes conscious during the course of his life. Peter was clean because he sincerely believed in Christ. The purpose, then, of what Jesus was now doing for him was not to reconcile him to God, but to remove from him, by such an example of humility, that particular defilement, the desire for earthly power and greatness, which Jesus at that very moment observed in His own.

¶ I never understood the full meaning of our Lord's words in St. John xiii. 10, until I beheld the better sort of East Indian natives return home after performing their customary ablutions. As they return to their habitations barefoot, they necessarily contract in their progress some portion of dirt on their feet; and this is universally the case, however nigh their dwellings may be to the riverside. When, therefore, they return, the first thing they do is to mount a low stool, and pour water into a small vessel to cleanse them from the soil which they may have contracted on their journey homewards; if they are of the higher class of society, a servant performs it for them, and then they are "clean every whit."[1]

¶ If you speak of sanctification as the original act of God in

[1] D. L. Moody.

separating us to Himself, then it is a completed thing, for we are described as "having been sanctified in Christ Jesus." If, again, you speak of it as a legal cleansing from all past guilt, it is complete; for, being washed in the precious blood, we are already clean. But if you regard it as the personal holiness of daily life, the purifying of the heart through faith by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost, then I am prepared to maintain from the whole testimony of the whole Word of God from one end to the other, that so long as we are in this world of conflict the sacred work is not complete, but progressive.[1]

2. It is doubtful whether in this new rite which preceded the Paschal supper, and in the reference to a past bathing, there is any specific allusion to baptism. Of course the sacramental process of initiation into the Christian society, and the action-parable of the Upper Room, express a common truth, that flesh and spirit must alike be cleansed before a frail, erring man is fit to stand in the presence of the Divine King and fulfil His behests. We have no direct statement that the twelve Apostles ever were baptized, although it is more than probable that those who were followers of John had received the rite at his hands, and these may have administered it to their comrades. Jesus Himself did not baptize. Yet without any express mention of the baptism of the twelve, Jesus affirms that they had been "bathed," and that, with one sad exception, the virtue of the act remained. It was by the Word they had been cleansed. There is no suggestion that the spiritual change was coincident in time with the use of an outward rite which typified it. By response to the personal influence of Jesus Christ, they knew in the first fresh moments of their surrender to His will that the prophetic promise had been fulfilled, and that from the guilty errors and disabilities of the past they had been purified.

¶ A modern writer, who lived for years in distressing poverty, and had no facilities in his sordid lodgings for washing, used to perform the greater part of his morning toilet at the British Museum, where he was a constant reader. He describes the shame he felt when he found a notice affixed, "These basins are to be used for casual ablutions only." He had the sensations of a detected criminal. There is a wide distinction between the bathing of the body and "casual ablutions," and the distinction

[1] E. Hoare, *Sanctification*, 66.

runs through the teaching of the incident before us. The daily-repeated grace is a complement to the washing of regeneration which comes through the all-encircling, soul-pervading influences of Jesus Christ. It is not to supersede or obscure that primary need, as Simon Peter was in danger of supposing.[1]

¶ One evening, before Thomas De Quincey died, he said to his daughter, "I cannot bear the weight of clothes on my feet." She pulled off the heavy blankets. "Yes, my love," he said, "that is much better; I am better in every way. You know these are the feet that Jesus washed." Ah, I scarcely can tell which I should admire most: His passion for me or His patience with me; His suffering or His longsuffering.[2]

I.

Regeneration.

1. In this text Jesus teaches that the efficacy of a disciple's first act of faith abides, and must not be thought of as invalidated by after-infirmities. If there were Divine forces present in that memorable change, it surely had qualities of permanence in it, for that which God effects cannot pass away as the morning cloud. We do not commit ourselves to the doctrines of indefectible grace and unconditional perseverance when we so interpret the Master's saying. The reference here made to Judas proves that to the rule of patient, tireless, long-continued, all-subduing grace there may be a tragic break. By false dealing, by calculated delinquency, by obstinate transgression, the bathed man may hopelessly defile himself again. But in eleven cases out of twelve the sanctifying grace asserts its permanence, for it is stamped with some of the qualities of its unchanging Minister.

¶ When the great warrior knew that the end was sure, he met it with the confident resignation of his faith. He had seen death too often and too near to dread the parting hour of mortal anguish. Chaplains, preachers, godly persons, attended in an adjoining room and came in and out as the heavy hours went on, to read the Bible to him or to pray with him. To one of them he put the moving question, so deep with penitential meaning, so pathetic in its humility and misgiving, in its wistful recall of the bright bygone dawn of life in the soul: "Tell me, is it possible

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Divine Craftsman*, 210.
[2] A. Smellie, *In the Hour of Silence*, 289.

to fall from grace?" "No, it is not possible," said the minister. "Then," said the dying Cromwell, "I am safe, for I know that I was once in grace."[1]

¶ The efforts of an unregenerate man to resist evil may be compared to the waves that break away from the receding tide; they are vain and constantly declining struggles against the backward movement of the heart. The falls of a regenerate man, on the other hand, are the recessions of the wave in an advancing tide; the great progression will still be Godward. What we want is the flow of the new nature to overbear all the obstacles of wind and sand, and this must be given by attraction from above.[2]

2. Why should the grace which wipes out past sin, and renews the thoughts and affections of the heart, fill this commanding place in the religious history? The Master forbids the idea that those successive effusions of spiritual influence, which keep the disciple in constant fitness for His uses, can compare in vital importance with this initial transformation. As He judges things, regeneration is a fact standing apart, and nothing must come into competition with it. The answer is many-sided. Initiation into the cleansing fellowship of Jesus is coincident with a deeper and more exhaustive self-discovery than is possible at the later stages of the religious history, unless indeed there has been flagrant, stupefying apostasy. The new convert has put off his disguises, making a frank and a full confession of sin and attaining a memorable release from its power. The whole manhood is moved by the fresh and dramatic disclosures of saving grace which attend the first surrender to the gospel call. The past is put off with a thoroughness which leaves little or no room for repetition. A man convinced of sin, and impelled by the new-born hope of redemption from its power, is passive under the processes of Divine mercy to an extent never perhaps equalled again. As those blessed influences which purify from the taint of the past immerse the soul, a strangely quiescent and submissive temper arises. The disciple is more conscious of God's act and less of his own than in those subsequent experiences in which the factors of self-discipline and self-direction tend to predominate. And because Divine power is so supremely conspicuous in this

[1] John Morley, *Oliver Cromwell*, 506.
[2] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 21.

purifying change its results abide, as perhaps grace sought through channels of daily edification does not.

¶ Many and great gifts of the Holy Spirit do come really into a man, which yet are not regeneration; but they go and come. Whereas that is regeneration when and where God hath planted His habitation, and God is become one with man. In God, neither the world, nor pleasure, nor joy is suffered; nature must want all these when the mind standeth in God.[1]

II.

Renewal.

1. When the gift which changes the moral habits, and puts away the dishonour and condemnation of the past, has been received, accessory processes are needed so that the disciple may be kept without spot. Christ's followers are moving in the midst of the unregenerate, and it is only through daily vigilance and faith that they can escape the mischances inseparable from their position in the world. Through this lowly ministry, commonly performed by the slave at the opening of a feast, Jesus wished to save His disciples from that loss of hope which their imminent backsliding might cause, to remind them of the gentle and compassionate view He took of their infirmities, and to prevent, where it might still be possible, infirmities from passing into flagrant sins. He is willing to treat their passing moods of envy and ambition as mere casualties of the way, like the dust and films of foulness cleaving to the feet of the pilgrim. Such things do not belong to the new manhood which has been called forth within them, but have in part happened through contact with the world.

¶ Learn a lesson from the eye of the miner, who all day long is working amid the flying coal-dust. When he emerges in the light of day, his face may be grimy enough; but his eyes are clear and lustrous, because the fountain of tears, in the lachrymal gland, is ever pouring its gentle tides over the eye, cleansing away each speck of dust as soon as it alights. Is not this the miracle of cleansing which our spirits need in such a world as this? And this is what our blessed Lord is prepared to do for us, if only we will trust Him.[2]

[1] Matthew Weyer.

[2] F. B. Meyer, *Present Tenses*, 22.

¶ As these men had with shame to lay their feet in Christ's hands, so must we. As His hands had to come in contact with the soiled feet of the disciples, so has His moral nature to come in contact with the sins from which He cleanses us. His heart is purer than were His hands, and He shrinks more from contact with moral than with physical pollution; and yet without ceasing we bring Him into contact with such pollution. When we consider what those stains actually are from which we must ask Christ to wash us, we feel tempted to exclaim with Peter, "Thou shalt never wash my feet!" As these men must have shivered with shame through all their nature, so do we when we see Christ stoop before us to wash away once again the defilement we have contracted; when we lay our feet soiled with the miry and dusty ways of life in His sacred hands; when we see the uncomplaining, unreproachful grace with which He performs for us this lowly and painful office. But only thus are we prepared for communion with Him and with one another. Only by admitting that we need cleansing, and by humbly allowing Him to cleanse us, are we brought into true fellowship with Him. With the humble and contrite spirit which has thrown down all barriers of pride and freely admits His love and rejoices in His holiness does He abide.[1]

2. We must seek daily release from the incipient defilements which fasten upon the regenerate personality without at first bringing upon it specific marks of guilt and wrong-doing. The neglected stain, however extenuating the circumstances in which it affixed itself, may end in a disfigurement that will be more than skin-deep in its results. Forgetfulness of the solemn lesson taught by the feet-washing may make the apostate. A lapse of temper, an unwatched desire provoked by our converse with the world, often incubates into a flagrant sin. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath"; and may we not add, upon any thoughtless mood or unchastened temper which has settled upon us whilst moving through secular scenes? The feet that have trod the hot, foul highways, or that perhaps have not even crossed the threshold of the home, must be washed. Do not slight the little shortcomings which befall you, and allow them to accrete into blemishes which may vitiate the life.

¶ To become indifferent or insensitive to the stains of daily sin is one of the saddest things that can befall us. Little by little

[1] Marcus Dods.

it puts a space between us and the Saviour, as begrimed windows seem to put the light further and further off. We must keep the glass clean if we would have the cheerful light; and we must keep close touch with the pardoning blood if we would maintain the joy of salvation.[1]

¶ In describing the different habits of the people of two adjacent provinces the Chinese say, "A Hupeh man does not sleep unless he has first cleansed his feet; but a Honan man only washes his feet on the day when he fords a river."

Up the long slope of this low sandy shore
  Are rolled the tidal waters day by day;
  Traces of wandering feet are washed away,
Relics of busy hands are seen no more.
The soiled and trampled surface is smooth'd o'er
  By punctual waves that high behests obey;
  Once and again the tides assert their sway,
And o'er the sands their cleansing waters pour.
Even so, Lord, daily, hourly, o'er my soul
  Sin-stained and care-worn, let Thy heavenly Grace—
A blest, atoning flood—divinely roll,
  And all the footsteps of the world efface,
That like the wave-washed sand this soul of mine,
Spotless and fair, smooth and serene, may shine![2]

[1] J. R. Howatt, *Jesus the Poet*, 273. [2] Richard Wilton.

The New Commandment.

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The New Commandment.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.—John xiii. 34.

When the Lord spoke to His disciples the words of the text, Judas had just left the company for the purpose of carrying out his plans. It was a night much to be observed, the events of which are recorded in the chapter from which the text is taken; it was the night upon which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted, in which Judas joined; it was the night upon which Christ gave that remarkable lesson in humility to His disciples by washing their feet, the feet of Judas apparently amongst the rest; it was the night, too, on which the Lord gave distinct warning to this same Judas of the treachery which he was about to commit; and it was after receiving this warning that Judas went out to do his work, leaving the eleven faithful disciples behind. Any lesson, therefore, given on such a night would be likely to be well remembered, to sink deeply into the heart, and one cannot be surprised that the Lord should take advantage of such an occasion to impress some important precepts and doctrines upon His disciples; one might expect that some things which the Lord would desire to say to the Apostles before His passion, and which could scarcely be said in the presence of Judas, would now be uttered without reserve. And indeed it does seem as though the departure of Judas had taken (if one may venture to say so) a weight from off the heart of the Lord, for He enters at once into some of His deepest and most affectionate conversations with the faithful eleven.

The time is short, and there is much to be done. The preparations for His capture will begin forthwith, and He has many things to say to His Apostles which cannot be so well said at any other time. What lesson shall He take first? Upon what doc-

trine shall He chiefly lay stress? "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Can we wonder that this new commandment should have afterwards so completely absorbed St. John's own mind, when we remember that he heard it enunciated under such circumstances as these?

I.

The New Commandment.

1. The emphatic word of the text is the word translated "one another." And the moment we place the emphasis there the meaning is evident. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love *one another*." Jesus had only the eleven disciples with Him; for the traitor had already gone out into the night. In the hearing of these eleven He had already announced the old commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," with an added emphasis and extended grasp. In particular, He had pointed out that their neighbour included their enemy, even such as the hated and despised Samaritan. Now He says, "A *new* commandment I give unto you, that ye love"—not your enemies, but—"one another." The old commandment is not taken away; it lies upon these men with a great obligation, such as never was known by Jew or Gentile before. But another is added to it, another and a different commandment, that Peter love John, and John love Andrew, and Andrew love "Judas-not-Iscariot." "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love *one another*."

¶ In the seventeenth century the minister of Anwoth, on the shores of Galloway, was the famous Samuel Rutherford, the great religious oracle of the Covenanters.

It is one of the traditions cherished on the spot, that on a Saturday evening, at one of those family gatherings whence, in the language of a great Scottish poet,

Old Scotia's grandeur springs,

when Rutherford was catechizing his children and servants, a stranger knocked at the door of the Manse, and (like the young English traveller in the celebrated romance which has given fresh life to those same hills in our own age), begged shelter for the

night. The minister kindly received him, and asked him to take his place amongst the family and assist at their religious exercises. It so happened that the question in the Catechism which came to the stranger's turn was that which asks, "How many commandments are there?" He answered, "Eleven." "Eleven!" exclaimed Rutherford; "I am surprised that a person of your age and appearance should not know better. What do you mean?" And he answered, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

The stranger proved to be the great divine and scholar, Archbishop Ussher, the Primate of the Church of Ireland.[1]

2. It is the love of one follower of Christ to another. And it was new, altogether new; for till then there were no Christians to love or be loved. The disciples recognized it as new. Of this we have an immediate and conclusive proof. When a new thing comes into the world, one of the first needs is a new name to call it by. A new invention or discovery must have its new name—the "telephone," let us say. So the disciples, recognizing that a new thing had appeared in the world chose a word,—like "telephone," compound of two things,—a word not absolutely new, but rarely used before, to name it. *Phil-adelphia* they called it, "love of brothers," "brotherly-love." And their use of this word shows us that they recognized this commandment as not only new, but different in kind from the old commandment of love. In the rope of Christian virtues, as it has been well called, which St. Peter weaves in the first chapter of his second letter, the last two strands are "brotherly-love" and "love," as the Revised Version does well to inform us: "In your faith supply virtue . . . and in your godliness love-of-the-brethren, and in your love-of-the-brethren love." The two virtues are kept distinct, for they rest upon two separate and distinct commands, the one very old, and the other altogether new.

¶ The Law had also already taught some points of this duty. Thus the Mosaic statute said, "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother,"—a mode of brother-love which, though negative in its form, was positive in its spirit. But in its expressiveness and

[1] R. E. Prothero, *The Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley*, ii. 272.

comprehensiveness this command was new. It was now given in direct phraseology, and it developed the one principle to which all preceding enactments were to be traced. Incidental injunctions had contained some one or other of the features of this brother-love; but all such commands were absorbed in this novel and engrossing declaration, "Love one another." Various practical elements had been previously delineated; but now, and for the first time, the theory was enforced.[1]

¶ This new love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church. It is like the difference between carrying water with great exertion from a distant fountain and having a stream from that fountain flow by one's own door, from which he can drink copiously, by whose invigorating scent he feels his spirits revived, into which he can throw himself for a refreshing bath. The Holy Spirit comes with glorious blessings to the children of God under the New Covenant. They drink, not with scant measure, but from a full and overflowing cup. They revel in the fulness of eternal love. And He that creates this blessedness is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, whom Jesus has sent from the Father.[2]

II.

The Old and the New.

1. There rest upon the follower of Christ two different commands to love. The old is not taken away; the new is added to it. Thou shalt love thine enemies, thou shalt do good to them that hate thee, thou shalt bless them that curse thee, thou shalt pray for them that despitefully use thee. That is the great Mosaic command: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Christ added nothing to it when He gave it to His followers. He simply pointed out its scope and intensity. Then, when the time came, He gave them another commandment to love, of a different scope and a different nature. And thenceforth these two separate commandments have lain upon every follower of Christ.

¶ If we would take even the old commandment and live up to it, it would solve a great many perplexing problems. Lay it down along the line of life, and see in imagination how life's problems would find in it their solution. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Let the slave-master simply apply that

[1] J. Eadie, *The Divine Love*, 244.
[2] A. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 574.

rule, and will he not straightway manumit his slave and set him free? Let us apply that rule to the perplexing problem of immigration. What if you or I were living under the harrow in Italy or Germany, and we saw the broad acres of America ready with fruitful juices to answer to our plow and our hoe,—what should we want America to do for us? Apply it to the labour problem. Let all working men, banded together as Knights of Labour or any other organization, do to the employer as they would have the employer do to them; and let the employers, the board of directors, the railroad managers, do to their employed as they would wish done to themselves, the relation being reversed: would there be any labour problem left? Our labour problem as it actually presents itself in real life is simply this: How can a community of men that are dealing with each other selfishly live peaceably? And the answer is, They cannot at all. Peace can be brought about only when that law of justice which is expressed by the Golden Rule and the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," are inwrought into the industrial fabric of society. Why, if the girl in the kitchen would always act as she would wish to be acted by if she were mistress, and the mistress would always act to the girl in the kitchen as she would wish to be acted by if she were the girl in the kitchen, the greatest plague of life would be a plague no longer.[1]

2. But is it possible for the Christian to love in two different ways? Yes; it is not only possible, it is inevitable. Not only must he love the world out of Christ in one way, and his brethren in Christ in another, but he cannot help it. Mark Guy Pearse, in his inimitable way, tells a story which lends itself readily to illustration. "Said one of my little ones to the youngest, in that threatening tone which is usually adopted in teaching, 'You must be good, you know, or father won't love you.' Then I called him to myself, and I said, gravely and tenderly: 'Do you know what you have said? It is not true, my boy—not a bit true.' 'Isn't it?' said the little one, surprised and doubtful. 'No,' I said; 'it is far away from the truth.' 'But you won't love us if we are not good, will you?' he asked. 'Yes,' I said, 'I can't help loving you; I shall love you for ever and ever, because I can't help it. When you are good I shall love you with a love that makes me glad; and when you are not good I shall love you with a love that hurts me; but I can't help loving you, because I am your father you know.'"

[1] L. Abbott, *Signs of Promise*, 234.

¶ Truly God has bound Himself by love's sweet constraint to make us capable of a love that is similar to His own; that is to share the highest of all things with us to the full. The self-sacrificing love that began in God must also go on in us. By every means, our hearts must be made capable of possessing and reciprocating it all. God knows how sweet it is to love and to be loved. And so the glory that He gave to Jesus—the supreme glory of self-sacrificing love—He has given even to us also, that we may be one in love even with the Father and the Son. Having therefore equipped us with this highest power, He lays on us the command which, enforced by His example, finds such an echo in our hearts. "Above *all* things have fervent love among yourselves!"[1]

(1) God the Father loves with this twofold love. "God so loved the world that he *gave his only begotten Son.*" Was the love that demanded *that* a love that made Him glad? Was it not a love that "hurt" Him? But, says Jesus, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him." Why, the Father loves every man, whether he keeps the commandments of the Lord or not. But this is a new love—a love that makes the Father glad. So also is God the Son capable of a twofold love. What a yearning love there is in that cry over the self-doomed city: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" How different from the love He bore to that disciple—"the disciple whom Jesus loved!"

¶ If you are reverent, you may see the love of Jesus by reading in succession John xi. 1–5, Mark xiv. 3–9, and Luke x. 38–42. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." And one man is known to all history as the friend of Jesus. They called Him the friend of publicans and sinners, a name that dimly reveals the inner secret of His life. And the last hours of His life were reserved, not for the crowd or the impenitent, but for those who loved Him best, and whose love He trusted when He went down to death.[2]

(2) And so also to the follower of the Lord is this double love not merely possible but quite inevitable—a love that hurts, and a love that makes him glad. Sharing the love of Christ which sent Him to die for sinners, he loves those for whom Christ died, though they do not recognize Him as a Prince and a Saviour.

[1] Frank W. Crossley. [2] F. W. Lewis, *The Unseen Life*, 18.

It is a real love in the true Christian, an anxious, eager, almost consuming love sometimes—a love which brings no gladness, but burns the breast with yearning desire. It is a love which suffers persecution, which makes the gentle woman courageous, which amazes and staggers the unbeliever. But there is a love also which makes the follower of Jesus glad.

¶ In a block of London's poorest abodes a woman was visiting one night. Trying room after room, she found only misery, filth, brutality. When to the weary knock at one more door a cheerful "Come in" was the response, and she found herself welcomed at the bright fireside of a poor but real follower of Jesus, there rushed forth to meet that welcome a love that made her glad. The one is a love that demands self-denial, the other is spontaneous, irresistible. The one makes us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light, the other proves us saints upon the earth.

III.

The Example.

1. "As I loved you"—these words point to an action which is past and done, not to a continued state. Westcott endeavours to preserve the tense and yet apply it in a general way. "The exact form ('I loved')," he says "implies that Christ's work is now ideally finished." But a much simpler explanation lies to our hand. "That ye love one another; as I loved you." The act He refers to is just past. It is the washing of their feet. We view that marvellous action chiefly as a great wonder of condescending love. He meant it as an instance of true *brotherly* love. If I, your Lord and Master, act as a brother towards you, ye ought to act as brothers towards one another. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye act towards one another as I have just acted towards you. The whole strange action of the feet-washing leads up to this command; and the command interprets the action. "As I have just loved you"—the exact meaning of the word is brought out better by that translation than by any other. In washing their feet He offered them a single instance of the brotherly love He commanded. It was, however, an instance which involved the principle, and was capable of endless application.

2. The instance of washing the disciples' feet involves, we say, the principle. From this and other instances of Christ's love St. John deduces that principle and applies it: "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Not *die* for the brethren. We may be called to death, and we may not; but we are to *lay down our lives* for the brethren. It is a comparatively easy thing to die for other people; but to live for them,—to lie down in the muddy road and let other men walk over us, to stand and let other people climb upon us, to be underneath our equals, to be the means by which they climb to preferment and reward,—that is hard. And that is what Christ did, and what Christ held up as the ideal for His children evermore.

¶ "It is well," said John Wesley, "that you should be thoroughly sensible of this: the Heaven of Heavens is Love, there is nothing higher in religion, there is in effect nothing else. If you look for anything but more Love, you are looking wide of the mark: you are getting out of the royal way."

"Beloved, let us love one another," says St. John,
Eagle of eagles calling from above:
Words of strong nourishment for life to feed upon,
"Beloved, let us love."

Voice of an eagle, yea, Voice of the Dove:
If we may love, winter is past and gone;
Publish we, praise we, for lo it is enough.

More sunny than sunshine that ever yet shone,
Sweetener of the bitter, smoother of the rough,
Highest lesson of all lessons for all to con,
"Beloved, let us love."[1]

3. Brotherly love is to be so openly shown that the followers of Christ will be recognized thereby. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Discipleship had previously been recognized by various tests. But no "master" had ever dreamed of imposing such an obligation, and creating by it such a characteristic. The scholars of the Academy, the Portico, or the Lyceum were at once known by their modes of reasoning, their attachment to distinctive theories,

[1] C. G. Rossetti.

and their frequent appeals to Plato, Zeno, or Aristotle. The Jew was recognized by his dress and language, his reverence for Moses, his selection among meats and drinks, and his antipathy to all the races of the uncircumcision. If you entered a company of Greeks, and found them theorizing upon pleasure, its nature, enjoyment, and modes, you would at once pronounce them to be Epicureans; or if, mixing with another crowd, you were met with such sounds as fate, liberty, necessity, wisdom, and chief good, you would feel in a moment that you were among the Stoics. Did you, in any city of Judæa, see a man clothed with a robe fringed deeper than common, and adorned with a phylactery of unusual breadth; did you follow him, and hear him pray with a stentorian voice to attract all passers-by, or see him give alms so ostentatiously as to draw upon him the public gaze and admiration, you would have no doubt that you beheld a Pharisee. And if, on the streets of Jerusalem, you met one in whose dress the prominent portions of the national uniform were carefully pared down, who, as he passed with you near the temple, observed with a quiet sneer that the scent of the burning sacrifice tainted the air, or who, as he looked on the place of sepulchres, assumed a philosophic air and spoke of death as the debt of nature, as a hard and universal necessity; smiled at the idea of a spirit-land, and hinted that the prevailing belief on that point was not consonant with reason, or based on a rational interpretation of Scripture—you would have no difficulty in detecting the speaker to be a Sadducee. But our Lord discards what is external; and His followers are to be known not by dress, language, or occupation, but by the mutual kindness which they cherish and exercise towards one another. They are to be known not by mind, but by heart; not by intellect, but by soul.

¶ In the first age of the Church the critical importance of the mutual love of Christians was recognized. Jerome preserves an anecdote of St. John which admirably illustrates this fact. In his last days, when he had to be carried into church, and was too old to speak for any length of time, the Apostle used in addressing the congregation to repeat simply the old commandment, which yet is, indeed, always new, "Little children, love one another." Then, as ever since, Christians were impatient of that teaching. His disciples, weary of the continual repetition,

asked why he always said this. "Because," he replied, "it is the Lord's commandment: and if it only be fulfilled, it is enough." Tertullian, in a famous passage of his "Apology," describes the impression made on the heathen by the mutual love of believers. They could not understand it. "'See,' say they, 'how they love each other!' for they themselves hate each other. 'And see how ready they are to die for each other!' for they themselves are more ready to slay each other."[1]

¶ Two centuries later than Tertullian a still more illustrious Christian — Chrysostom—describes the scandal caused to the heathen by the lovelessness of believers. His language is on many grounds very remarkable, and singularly apposite to the conditions of the modern Church. He is commenting on Christ's "new commandment," and the testimony which, by obeying it, Christians are to deliver to the world; and, after his practice, he draws on his intimate knowledge of the religious life of his time in order to illustrate the sacred text, and to press home on his hearers its practical lessons. "Miracles, he says, "do not so much attract the heathen as the mode of life; and nothing so much causes a right life as love . . . And with good reason. When one of them sees the greedy man, the plunderer, exhorting others to do the contrary, when he sees the man who was commanded to love even his enemies treating his very kindred like brutes, he will say that the words are folly. . . We, we are the cause of their remaining in error. Their own doctrines they have long condemned, and in like manner they admire ours, but they are hindered by our mode of life." Chrysostom goes on to say that it is vain to point out to the disgusted heathen the virtues of famous Christians of former times. About them they are sceptical so long as the Christians whom they see and know are scandalously unworthy of their profession. "Wherefore," he concludes, "I fear lest some grievous thing come to pass, and we draw down upon us heavy vengeance from God."[2]

¶ Almost twenty years ago, while living in America, I went to reside in a little town called Delaware, in Ohio; and the first Saturday evening of my residence I went as a young man to the Y.M.C.A. prayer-meeting. There were about one hundred young men present, and the meeting was of a most hearty type. The last hymn sung was—

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love.

And during the singing of that hymn there was a general hand-

[1] H. H. Henson, *Godly Union and Concord*, 161. [2] *Ibid.* 162.

shaking going on, and I, as a stranger, was specially singled out for attention. The result, so far as I was concerned, was that I attended that prayer-meeting regularly for more than five years. That may be a trifle too unconventional for our Churches, but we want more, much more, of the spirit that prompted that exhibition of sympathetic Christian friendliness and love.[1]

¶ "What is love, Mary?" said Seventeen to Thirteen, who was busy with her English lessons.

"I think it is a verb," said John, "and I think it must have been originally the perfect of live, like thrive, throve, strive, strove."

"Capital, John," suddenly growled uncle Oldbuck, "it was that originally, and it will be our own faults, children, if it is not that at last, as well as, ay, and more than at first."[2]

¶ If we really and lovingly studied the characters of others we should often end by being interested and even fascinated where at first we were only repelled. A portrait-painter must often feel this. Some of us may be reminded of the lines of Browning. "Beside the Drawing-board":—

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
  I turned from to a cold clay cast—
I have my lesson, understand
  The worth of flesh and blood at last.
Nothing but beauty in a Hand?
  Because he could not change the hue,
  Mend the lines and make them true
To this which met his soul's demand—
  Would Da Vinci turn from you?

And, more than that, if we love and care for others we shall often find that the very fact of our loving them helps them to make themselves more love-worthy, just as a carefully tended plant responds to the gardener's care.[3]

¶ "As every lord giveth a certain livery to his servants," says Latimer, "Love is the Livery of Christ."

[1] W. Lee, *From Dust to Jewels*, 96.
[2] John Brown, *Horæ Subsecivæ*, 2nd Ser., 299.
[3] E. Wordsworth, *Onward Steps*, 129.

The Secret of the Untroubled Heart.

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THE SECRET OF THE UNTROUBLED HEART.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.—John xiv. 1.

1. THERE is one chapter in the biography of distinguished persons —in the biography of great geniuses, or of eminent saints or seers—which has for us special interest, the chapter entitled "Closing Days." We are curious to learn how the great man bore himself, or what fell from his lips, during those days, in the shadow of the approaching end; to see something of the thoughts which then occupied his mind, or to hear something of his latest words. What of his behaviour, his expression, we ask, in his latest hours? The favourite pursuit—was its influence upon him then exemplified? The ruling passion—was it strong with him in death? Geoffrey Chaucer died making a ballad; Waller, reciting verses from his beloved Virgil; Haller, the famous physician, fingering his pulse and murmuring, when he found it almost gone, "Yes, the artery ceases to beat"; John Keats, whispering low in reply to a friend who inquired how he felt, "Better, better. I feel the daisies growing over me." "Let me hear once more," sighed Mozart, "those notes, so long my solace and delight." Rousseau, when dying, bade his attendants place him before the open window, that he might take a final look at his garden, and bid adieu to Nature.

In this scene we have the beating of Christ's heart and the vision of His soul. Here He is, we may say, in His habitual considerateness and sympathy, in the quick, tender considerateness and sympathy that characterized Him all through His course, from the moment when, at the beginning of His ministry, He was filled with compassion for the multitude because they were as sheep without a shepherd, to the moment when, in the night of His betrayal, He pleaded, "If ye seek me, let these go their way."

2. Night had fallen with Oriental swiftness upon Jerusalem; and there, in the guest-chamber of a friend's house, Jesus was partaking of the Passover Supper with His disciples. Not with all of them. Judas had gone on his mission of darkness. The shadow of some boding treachery had fallen on these men and chilled their hearts. "One of you shall betray me." In the intense quiet that had followed those words, they had looked at one another and doubted one another; they had searched their own hearts and almost doubted themselves. Only one of them had been free from doubt, and he had something worse—he knew. But he had gone; and after his departure the cup of foreboding was filled to the brim by Jesus Himself. Quietly, but with an awful intensity of meaning, He told them that He too was going away—going where they could not follow Him then. Not by any dusty Syrian highway was He going from them.

No farewell in history approaches this in bitterness. Before another sun had set Jesus was lying low in death. His disciples were orphaned. No wonder that they were troubled. Their universe seemed shaken. Every ambition, every hope, was taken from them. Failure appeared to be written on their Lord's mission and on their own. Such trouble is not mere sorrow. That may be hard to bear, but this is the collapse of all plans of service, all visions of future good and blessing. The sky was falling; all the lights in the firmament were being put out. Their life had become like a heaving sea, and even Jesus seemed powerless to quiet it. Their Master bids them conquer that passion of anxiety, of fear, of bitter disappointment. They are not to yield to it, for yielding means despair; it is paralysis for every hope of influence and usefulness. There is a glorious picture in St. John's Apocalypse: God "shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." That is a golden promise. Here is something still more suggestive. The disciples are themselves to dry up the fountain of tears; they are to quiet their own heaving breasts. Trouble has come, but Jesus bids them master it.

3. How does He comfort them? Not by commonplace ethics or moralizings, but by drawing aside the veil that conceals the spiritual world, and revealing to them entirely new conceptions concerning the Father Himself, the future life, and their own

relations to it. He, their Lord, is the Lord of life, and He will prepare for them a place in the glorious world which He Himself is about to enter. He does not so much teach truths as reveal facts about the future life. He "brings life and immortality to light." He is to depart, they are to remain. More remains concealed than even He can reveal to them. They can only trust Him, their loving Lord, and wait for the heavenly life of which He assures them. His chief urgency is that they should implicitly trust in Him—trust Him even as they trusted God Himself: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

¶ My last lesson was the fullest revelation of the master (James Prince Lee). I was staying with him for a day or two at Mauldeth, a short time before his death. We were alone. After dinner I turned the conversation from work at Manchester to work at Birmingham. He was glad, I think, to go back to the old days. He spoke with proud delight of his favourite classical authors, as if they were still his familiar companions. He poured out quotation after quotation as we used to hear them at school, and dwelt on that finest single line, as he said, in Latin literature, "Virtutem videant intabescantque relicta." Graver, sadder subjects followed; memories of failures and disappointments. Then came a long silence. It was growing dark. Suddenly he turned to me and said, "Ah, Westcott, fear not, only believe." In those four words—no more was spoken—there was a true interpretation of life as the teacher saw it, and as he prepared his scholars to see it: Work to be done, work to be done in the face of formidable difficulties, work to be done in faith on God.[1]

I.

Faith in God.

"Ye believe in God."

"As ye believe in God, so believe in me." This seems to be the true relation of the two clauses of our Lord's command. The words of the original are capable of a fourfold interpretation, but this seems to be the simplest, and most consistent with the moral and spiritual truth of our Lord's teaching.

He would not call them to believe in God as they believed in

[1] *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, i. 28.

Himself, for that would really be setting forth His created manifestation as more trustworthy than the Divine reality.

Neither would He bid them practise a double faith, believing in God and believing in Himself. Such a command would imply the insufficiency of believing in God. We are not to believe in God as an abstract object, and in Christ as a collateral object; not in God as an eternal object, and in Christ as a distinct object more available as being within the reach of our natural senses.

We are to believe in God with a supreme all-absorbing faith, and because we do so, we are to believe in Christ as the manifestation of His eternal love, not separate, collateral, instrumental, but identical, co-essential, indissolubly one with Himself. The belief which we have in God will be the measure of our true belief in Christ. As God is independent of all outward circumstance, so are we to believe in Christ with an entire independence of all outward circumstance. The events of the world do not shake our belief in God. Neither must they shake our belief in Christ.

1. *Faith in God implies an act of the will.*—Faith in God is a moral act; it is not an emotion, an impression, the result of considerations which act upon a man from without; it is an act in which he exercises moral choice. To have faith we must will to have it. This is not to say that there can be a true faith apart from reasonable grounds of faith. But these grounds may exist, they may be apparent, and yet faith may be absent, because the temper and spirit of the man make him reluctant to exert his will, or because he misconceives the nature of the act. Men confound faith and opinion; even in opinion a man's moral habits and tendencies count for a great deal; and we often predict what a man's opinions will be from what we know of his character. But in the formation of opinion the will has no direct function except to compel the intellect to investigate the facts by which opinion should be determined. In faith the case is wholly different. When the facts which should command faith are present and seen, faith may be withheld. Faith is an act of the will; and if we suppose that we shall come to believe in God and in Christ as the result of external forces which compel belief, we shall not believe at all. And when faith, resting on adequate

grounds, is assaulted by doubt, the doubt must be met by a resolute decision.

¶ No man can ever estimate the power of the will. It is a part of the Divine nature, all of a piece with the power of creation. We speak of God's fiat. "*Fiat lux et lux erat*" (Let light be and light was). Man has his fiat. The achievements of history have been the choices, the determinations, the creations of the human will.[1]

2. *Belief in God precedes belief in Christ.*—Manifestly, everybody must believe in God before he can believe in Jesus Christ in any deep sense; for to say that "Jesus is the Son of God" already implies a belief in God. This was clearly true of the Christian converts from among the Jews, who were already worshippers of Jehovah; and it was true also, though to a less extent, of the Greeks, as St. Paul recognized in his famous speech at Athens; and it remains true of the converts from heathendom to-day. In the mind of all men there is some recognition of a Creator Spirit, with whom they are led to identify the Spirit of Jesus. And so the progress of belief is logically from the first article of the Creed to the second, from belief in God the Father and Creator to belief in Him whom the Father sent. At the same time, the belief in Jesus at once reacts upon the belief in God. The heathen convert, though he may employ the same word for God as before, has very different thoughts about Him; he is taught to believe that the holiness and loving-kindness of Jesus are the holiness and loving-kindness of the Creator God; and even the pious Jew gained a new insight into what these great qualities meant—the mercy and truth which he had always held to be the attributes of Jehovah. The two beliefs therefore go together. First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who has made me, and all the world; secondly, in God the Son, who has redeemed me, and all mankind.

¶ It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that modern Christians have inverted the order of the text. They believe in Christ, and therefore they believe in God. Indeed, this would seem to be the inevitable order of discipleship. Christ calls men to Himself. "Come unto me," "Follow me," and in obedience to His summons men come also to God; but Christian Apologetic is

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 1.

concerned not with disciples, as such, but with those who are not disciples, but, at most, friendly inquirers. Therefore the order of reason is the order of Apologetic. First Theism, then Christianity. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Every Theist is to that extent Christian, that is to say, Christianity is the logical inference from his Theistic belief. A Christianity which violates Theism is a contradiction in terms.[1]

II.

Faith in Christ.

"Believe also in me."

Christ makes for Himself the most majestic claim. "Believe in Me," He says, "as you believe in God, and so you will believe in God in a richer and fuller form." "Ye believe in God—as all your Jewish ancestors believed in Him—add to that faith all the things I have shown you and taught you. Believe in God, as He has spoken to you with My lips, and dwelt with you in My fellowship with you, and loved you with My heart. You know I have dwelt with you and loved you. Do you know why? It is that you may know that God is love. It is that you may come to know that beyond the darkness of the hour and the loneliness of the years—alike in the starlight and in the storm—there is but one thing: the breath, the light, the end of being; and that thing is the love wherewith God loves you."

There is a clear claim put forward by Christ that His disciples shall repose in Him the same absolute, unquestioning, unlimited faith that they repose in God. It is not merely that Jesus claims absolute infallibility for His teaching concerning God and man, though this is necessarily included; and, if there were no clear assertion beyond this, we should still be driven to seek a deeper explanation of it. Even if we had nothing to direct us beyond our Saviour's repeated assertions that the words He spoke were without any exception or qualification the words of God, that not the slightest taint of imperfection marked His presentation of eternal truth, that His union with God was so perfect that He could say: The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all

[1] H. Hensley Henson, *The Value of the Bible*, 143.

things that Himself doeth;—even if there were nothing more than this we should find it utterly impossible to explain Jesus Christ by any principles of human development, or by any conceivable communication of the Divine Spirit to one who was a son of Adam and nothing more. Nowhere except out of the very bosom of the Father could He come who was the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person.

¶ Is not Christendom built on the "also" of Christ's supper table? Luther has remarked that in this fourteenth chapter "we have the great articles of Christian doctrine in most impressive exhibition, and fundamentally established as in hardly another place of Scripture." This is true. Sometimes we turn with a sigh from the elaborate confessions of later ages to the confession summed up in the short saying of the Lord. Less than this there may not be, more than this there need not be, in the faith of a Christian. The "also" must stand out in bold relief, rightly apprehended and firmly grasped; but when it is so grasped the mind holds the essential Christian verity. It is the *plus* in respect of which the faith of the Christian Church is apart from and more than every mere theistic religion—a *plus* that is not an addition only, but a new faith. For the trust in God, which is "also" with trust in Christ, is not the same as the trust which is without.[1]

1. *Christ is the Revealer of God.*—Jesus Christ is the Divine Revealer of God. Without Christ there is no real knowledge of God in the depth of His love, the tenderness of His nature or the lustrousness of His holiness; there is no certitude; the God that we see outside of Jesus Christ is sometimes doubt, sometimes hope, sometimes fear, always far-off and vague, an abstraction rather than a person, "a stream of tendency" without us, that which is unnameable, and the like. Jesus Christ has showed us a Father, has brought a God to our hearts whom we can love, whom we can know really though not fully, of whom we can be sure with a certitude which is as deep as the certitude of our own personal being; He has brought to us a God before whom we do not need to crouch far off, He has brought to us a God whom we can trust. Very significant is it that Christianity alone puts the very heart of religion in the act of trust. Other religions put it in dread, worship, service, and the like. Jesus Christ alone says that the

[1] J. M. Laing.

bond between men and God is that blessed one of trust. And He says so because He alone brings us a God whom it is not ridiculous to tell men to trust.

To those who can receive this heavenly vision all human life is altered. We have dimly seen the heart of God, and we are no longer scared by the strangeness of His vesture or by the rough voice with which He sometimes seems to speak to us in the course of the world. We believe that His very nature and property is to forgive and pity, that the central core of His ethical being is love, that He withdraws Himself from us at times, only in order to increase our hunger and thirst for His presence, that though for a small moment He may forsake us, yet with everlasting kindness will He have mercy upon us. And thus by His sublime anthropomorphism Jesus assuages for His followers all the worst terrors and sorrows that Nature brings upon us. Through Him we have learnt that love, and even self-sacrificing love, is no local and transient product, but something at the very root of the universe, as it were, "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world," a partial manifestation of that which was in the beginning with God, of the very soul of God. The God disclosed to us by Christ is not one who regards the terrible drama of human suffering from afar, but one who Himself shares our strife and bears our woes. Christ gave us the conception of a God who actually leads struggling souls on personally, and is not content with merely pointing out the road to them.

St. Philip and other anxious and sorrowing spirits need no longer go about groping for guidance and crying mournfully, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus has already shown us the Father. Those who have really seen Him have seen the Father so far as it is possible or necessary that we should see Him in this life. God has fulfilled to man that old gladdening promise, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

¶ Christ is the ladder between God and man. In His humanity He touches the earth; in His Divinity He touches the heaven, and on Jesus Christ as a ladder God comes down from heaven to earth and makes Himself known to man; on Jesus Christ as a ladder man climbs up from earth to heaven and is joined to God. Wonderful is the comprehensiveness of this short creed which Jesus Christ taught us: "Believe in God,"—that

solves all the problems of creation; "Believe in me"—that solves all the problems of redemption.[1]

2. *Christ is Himself Divine.*—Not only is Jesus Christ the Revealer of God, but He Himself is God. Light shines through a window, but the light and the glass that makes it visible have nothing in common with one another. The Godhead shines through Christ, but *He* is not a mere transparent medium. It is Himself that He is showing us when He is showing us God. "He that hath seen me hath seen"—not the light that streams through Me—but "hath seen," in Me, "the Father." And because He is Himself Divine and the Divine Revealer, therefore the faith that grasps Him is inseparably one with the faith that grasps God. Men could look upon a Moses, an Isaiah, or a Paul, and in them recognize the irradiation of the divinity that imparted itself through them, but the medium was forgotten in proportion as that which it revealed was beheld. You cannot forget Christ in order to see God more clearly; to behold Him is to behold God.

¶ This was reached at a very early stage of Christian thought by a writer of inspired insight who seized his pen and, without argument or explanation, wrote: *the Word was God.* The critical penetrativeness of that writer is too little recognized. He overleapt centuries of controversy. He saw at the first glance, what all history has abundantly demonstrated, that all intermediate compromises, such as the Arian, were neither historically nor logically tenable, and that, therefore, the issue was clean and clear between mere humanity and very Deity. With that issue before him, he wrote, not so much the best or highest but the *only* description of Jesus that he could write. As a Christian, he could not describe Christ as mere man; nor can we. As a thinker he could not describe Him as an intermediate divinity; nor can we. If then he was to write at all he could write but one thing, and if we are to say at all what Christ is, we can say but that one thing too. It is saved from being quite incredible only by being quite inevitable.[2]

3. *All imperfect revelation of God is prophetic of, and leads up towards, the perfect revelation in Jesus Christ.*—The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives that truth in a very striking fashion.

[1] A. T. Pierson, *The Hopes of the Gospel*, 130.
[2] P. C. Simpson, *The Fact of Christ*, 111.

He compares all other means of knowing God to fragmentary syllables of a great word, of which one was given to one man and another to another. God "spoke at sundry times and in manifold portions to the fathers by the prophets"; but the whole word is articulately uttered by the Son, in whom He has "spoken unto us in these last times." The imperfect revelation, by means of those who were merely mediums for the revelation, leads up to Him who is Himself the Revelation, the Revealer, and the Revealed. And in like manner, all the imperfect faith that, laying hold of other fragmentary means of knowing God, has tremulously tried to trust Him, finds its climax and consummate flower in the full-blossomed faith that lays hold upon Jesus Christ. The unconscious prophecies of heathendom; the trust that select souls up and down the world have put in One whom they dimly apprehended; the faith of the Old Testament saints; the rudimentary beginnings of a knowledge of God and of a trust in Him which are found in men to-day, and amongst us, outside of the circle of Christianity—all these things are as manifestly incomplete as a building reared half its height, and waiting for the corner-stone to be brought forth, the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the intelligent and full acceptance of Him and faith in Him.

As ideas, the central points of Christian faith—such as a trust in the Divine Fatherhood and a hope beyond the grave—are not altogether new. Many earnest and noble souls have stretched out their minds towards them. What, then, was lacking for faith? Just that, after all, there were but ideas, speculations, yearnings; and our thoughts on these matters are not the sure measure of what really is. Before the stern unyielding facts of life and especially before life's final fact of death, how easily such thoughts falter and fail.

> Man is of dust: ethereal hopes are his,
> Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
> Want due consistence; like a pillar of smoke,
> That with majestic energy from earth
> Rises; but, having reached the thinner air,
> Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.

Who will assure us, in face of "the thinner air" that is the breath of death, that these hopes and speculations are the sure

"pillar of cloud" leading us truly to a promised land, and are not but a "pillar of smoke" from the fires of human fancy? A faith thus founded will always be cherishable by certain temperaments —and it is largely a matter of temperament—but it will never really grip the mass of men, simply because it is a mere edifice of conceptions insecurely founded on the bed-rock of fact. But it is just this that Christian faith possesses. Its basis is not the ideas of Jesus but the fact. It brings, not a new doctrine merely, but new data. It comes not with the theory of a fatherly God, but with a phenomenon, in history and experience, which means that. Now all this is precisely what faith needs. Faith—as indeed may be said of all truth—is like Antaeus in Greek legend, who was invincible when touching mother-earth; and the mother-earth of faith is fact—the fact of Christ.

¶ It was as if God had a revelation to make to the world, a word to teach it, His own name; and He taught it as we teach a little child, letter by letter. To one nation came a message by Buddha, to another by Zoroaster, to another by Confucius, to another by Moses, until at last the full Word was revealed, the Word that was made flesh and dwelt with us. . . . No truth can be taught until the world is prepared for it. . . . To me it seems I can read my Bible with a greater reverence and interest now I see in it a continuous record of a continuous revelation, wherein God appears ever growingly more tender, more merciful, where the false human ideas of Him as held by Abraham, Joshua and Saul are softened down in the tenderness of Isaiah, and finally in the life of our Lord Jesus.[1]

4. *Without faith in Christ, faith in God is incomplete.*—Without faith in Christ such faith in God as is possible is feeble, incomplete, and will not last long. Historically a pure Theism is all but impotent. There is only one example of it on a large scale in the world, and that is a kind of bastard Christianity—Mohammedanism; and we all know what value that has as a religion. There are many among us who claim to be very advanced thinkers, and who call themselves Theists, and not Christians. That is a phase that will not last. There is little substance in it. The God whom men know outside of Jesus Christ is a poor, nebulous thing; an idea, not a reality. He, or rather It, is a

[1] *Quintin Hogg*, 307.

film of cloud shaped into a vague form, through which you can see the stars. It has little power to restrain. It has less to inspire and impel. It has still less to comfort; it has least of all to satisfy the heart. You will have to get something more substantial than the far-off God of an unchristian Theism if you mean to sway the world and to satisfy men's hearts.

¶ Mr. Fujimoto was led to tell us some of his early difficulties in the Dōshisha University at Kyoto. He had been baptized, but had adopted extreme views on Higher Criticism. He could acknowledge the one God and Father, but beyond that he could not see. Various "holiness" and other meetings were held, but he found no comfort in them. Mr. Barclay Buxton tried hard to help him, but still he had no real light. One day having been pressed hard to attend one of these meetings, he said to himself, "No, I am going instead into the country alone to fight it out with myself and God!" He went and spent four hours in agonizing prayer to the God and Father for further light, if such light was really to be had. It was about 1.30 p.m. (half-way through the four hours) that a moment came which he says he shall always distinctly remember. He seemed to hear a voice saying in the concluding words of St. John xiv. 1, "Believe also in me." He instantly took out his Testament and read straight through the chapter and on to the end of chapter xvi., and he returned from that four hours a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ.[1]

III.

The Secret of a Quiet Heart.

"Let not your heart be troubled."

The word used here by our Saviour and translated "be troubled" does not signify any kind of sadness or sorrow; nor are we to understand that it is either desirable or possible to banish all sadness and sorrow from the mind of any son of man under the conditions that prevail upon this earth. The word used by Jesus signifies to be agitated, perplexed, and thrown into confusion. It is the description of a life thrown as it were off its centre, and tossed hither and thither by the force of perplexing and adverse circumstances.

It is the antithesis of that state which Christ described as

[1] Bishop Ingham, *From Japan to Jerusalem*, 48.

peace, the rocky strength that is not exempt from sorrow, but remains unshaken by it. For we must remember that Jesus Christ Himself, though He spoke of giving His peace to His disciples, was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

¶ "Troubled" is the best English equivalent we can give for the Greek; but, as generally employed, its force is fainter. The original verb—used often of the agitation of waters, the heaving and surging of the sea—aptly represents the deeper agitations of the soul, painful to strong natures, dangerous to the weak. Thrice it is used of our Lord Himself in some access of vehement emotion. So He shared the experiences which in us He would comfort and control. Such a condition needs control, tending as it does to confusion of judgment and suspension of faith. "Let not your heart be troubled" was then not only a word of sympathetic kindness, but a needful counsel; and it is so still, falling with composing power on many an agitated mind.[1]

¶ I happened to read, one immediately after the other, the lives of two women written by themselves; the one was Sarah Bernhardt's, the other Marianne Farningham's. I gathered little in the way of help from Sarah Bernhardt's. She is a woman with a kind heart. That at least can be said of her. At the siege of Paris she got all her friends safely out of the city, but remained herself, and turned her house into a hospital where she nursed the wounded soldiers. But in looking for any guiding principle of her life, it seemed to be chiefly this—that whatever she was thwarted in, whatever she was asked or recommended not to do, that was the very thing she would set herself to do with all the somewhat hysterical energy of her nature.

It was refreshing to turn to Marianne Farningham's. In quoting what have been the two mottoes of her life, she says, "We change our mottoes as we proceed through life. Mine is now 'Let not your heart be troubled,' but through all my working years my favourite was 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'" One can understand why she changed her motto in later life, from a remark she made in reply to an Address presented to her—"The beauty of getting old is that not so much is expected of one, and one has time to sit and think." In her strenuous years she had the earlier motto. For the "doing" we need Christ's strength, for the "thinking" we need Christ's comfort. The evening of her days had come, when the hands had to be folded from much labour, and she had to face the approaching night. We are so helpless, so ignorant, in view of the great un-

[1] T. D. Bernard, *The Central Teaching of Jesus Christ*, 125.

seen realities which each day's journey is bringing us nearer to. We need hope and comfort, and Christ's words are specially suited to such conditions and such times.[1]

1. *Christ does not offer exemption from sorrow.*—It has been a mistake of most of the remedies proposed for a troubled heart that they have aimed at eliminating sorrow from the earth. In this they have aimed, not only at what is impossible, but at what is, as a primary aim, undesirable also. Ancient Epicureanism, for example, sought to banish sorrow as far as possible by avoiding excess of pleasurable excitement, by making the tenor of life so even that extravagant excesses in pleasure should not occur to plunge men into consequent excess of pain. Modern Epicureanism, a more wretched fallacy still, adopts as its watchword: "A short life and a merry one; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." It endeavours by the constant inoculation of pleasure in its most feverish form to exclude the possibility of pain, and to drive life's pulse at its hottest pace, let the end come when it will. Stoicism sought to remove sorrow by the destruction of feeling, to create men who should not be flesh and blood, but iron and brass. It tried to crush and destroy the emotional side of life by such tremendous acts of self-conquest, or rather of self-mutilation, as to make man a monster—a "reason" with an iron will and no heart. And Buddhism, with all its beauty, has at the very centre of it a feminine anguish to be released from sorrow, and knows no way to cure earth's heart-break except in an unmanly longing for extinction, in giving up the life, not in the Christian way so as to find it again, but in such a way that it disappears altogether into the great abyss of the Infinite.

> Securely cabined in the ship below,
> Through darkness and through storm I cross the sea,
> A pathless wilderness of waves to me:
> But yet I do not fear, because I know
> That he who guides the good ship o'er that waste
> Sees in the stars her shining pathway traced.
> Blindfold I walk this life's bewildering maze;
> Up flinty steep, through frozen mountain pass,
> Through thorn-set barren and through deep morass;
> But strong in faith I tread the uneven ways,

[1] John S. Mayer.

And bare my head unshrinking to the blast,
Because my Father's arm is round me cast;
And if the way seems rough, I only clasp
The hand that leads me with a firmer grasp.[1]

2. *The world cannot give us heartsease.*—The worldling says "Come with me, and we will go where there is the lilt of merry music and the twinkle of dancing feet. Once at the feast, you will forget your sadness." We know how little this man's advice is worth. We have heard and, it may be, yielded to this plea for a little diversion; and we know that a troubled heart cannot be sung and danced and fooled out of its grieving. The world's music may get into your feet; but only the music of heaven, of the Divine promises, can get into a troubled heart. In this world of problem and passion, and fear and distress, where the shadow of separation veils from us much that once was ours and lies soft and silent upon all that we do now possess, there is but one way to the quiet heart. It lies, not in the wisdom that would know all, or in the folly that would forget all, but in the faith that trusts the love of God the Father in the face of Jesus Christ—the faith that leads a man, in all the trouble of his days, to shelter his soul in the promise, yes, and in the silence of the Infinite Mercy. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

¶ Some think that the secret of peace is in the vision of science. There is a tendency to approach every experience of life along the line of the intellect. Faith in some quarters is depreciated. But, however men may slight it, they learn soon or late that they cannot live without it. These scientists, with their delicate instruments and their subtle treatises can say a great many things to us, but they cannot say all we need to hear. During the last fifteen years I have read many of their books. I honour them, and the service they have wrought; but I have missed one note in them all—the note of comfort. There is one thing they cannot in all their wisdom say to us: "Let not your heart be troubled." They cannot say that. They can teach us to talk wisely, but they cannot help us to live quietly. They do not give any help in the day of a troubled heart. In that day I do not want to be reasoned with, I want to be comforted. I do not want learning, I want love. I do not want man, I want God. I do not want science, I want faith.[2]

[1] Anne Charlotte Lynch Botta. [2] P. C. Ainsworth, *A Thornless World*, 90.

3. *Jesus unfolds the secret.*—He says that personal faith will keep the heart at peace. We may not be able to rule the storm, but we can keep the storm from ruling us. Christ tells of the man who built his house upon a rock; and flood and tempest came and beat upon the house, but it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. God has not taught us how to rule tempests, but He has taught us how to build houses that will defy these tempests. He has not given us lordship over life's stressful weather, but He has given us the lordship of our hearts. If we trust we may be quiet. Trust is always tranquillity. To cast a burden off myself on others' shoulders is always a rest. But trust in Jesus Christ brings infinitude on my side. Submission is repose. When we cease to kick against the pricks they cease to prick and wound us. Trust opens the heart, like the windows of the Ark tossing upon the black and fatal flood, for the entrance of the peaceful dove with the olive branch in its mouth. Trust brings Christ to my side in all His tenderness and greatness and sweetness. If I trust, "all is right that seems most wrong." If I trust, conscience is quiet. If I trust, life becomes "a solemn scorn of ills." If I trust, inward unrest is changed into tranquillity, and mad passions are cast out from him that sits "clothed and in his right mind" at the feet of Jesus.

¶ There is a beautiful figure employed in the Apocalypse to denote the calmness of the soul which arises from the consciousness of God's presence. Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal. The idea conveyed to our minds by this emblem is that of a sea, not of glass, but like glass, a sea the glassy surface of whose waters is ruffled by not so much as a passing breeze, and whose crystal depths are lit up with sunshine, a sea smooth and clear as crystal. The beauty of the emblem is that it combines the most restless, unstable thing in nature with the idea of perfect repose and tranquillity. The sea in its restlessness is a true likeness of the human heart. Every breath of wind disturbs the one, every breath of adversity troubles the other. But there is something which can bring perfect repose to the soul—the presence of God. This is the truth which is taught by this sublime image of the sea like glass before the throne. It represents the calm of a soul which dwells in the presence of God. We think of heaven as calm because it is out of reach of the storms of earth, but this is not the idea conveyed by the vision. The heaven which it reveals is a heaven on earth. The scene of

the Apocalypse is laid, not in some far-off sphere, some fabled Elysium, but here on earth. Heaven is within the good man's heart. The sea which is before the throne is smooth and clear as crystal, not because it is remote from earthly storms, but because the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters.

¶ I knew a man, since gone to his rest, who carried on an active service for his Master in the busiest of all cities, and who selected for himself a telegraphic address which might stand at the head of his notepaper. What do you think this busy man's address was? It was this:—"UNDISTURBED, LONDON." And it always found him at home—that is to say, in God—so far as I could judge of his dwelling-place in the days when I knew him, before he had run out his leasehold in the Church militant and taken up his freehold in the Church triumphant. Such an one, living at such an address, verifies the truth of the Scripture which says of the good man that—

> He shall not be afraid of evil tidings;
> His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.[1]

Oh! the bells rang out for Easter, rang strong and sweet and shrill,
  And the organ's rolling thunder pealed through the long church aisle,
And the children fluttered with flowers, and I sat mute and still,
  I who had clean forgotten both how to pray and to smile.

And I murmured in fierce rebellion: "There is nought that endures below,
  Nought but the lamentations that are rent from souls in pain";
And the joy of the Easter music, it struck on my ears like a blow,
  For I knew that my day was over, I could never be glad again!

And then—how it happened I know not—there was One in my sight who stood,
  And lo! on His brow was the thorn-print, in His hands were the nails' rough scars,
And the shadow that lay before Him was the shade of the holy rood,
  But the glow in His eyes was deeper than the light of the morning stars.

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *Aaron's Breastplate*, 44.

"Daughter," He said, "have comfort! Arise! keep Easter-tide!
I, for thy sins who suffered and died on the cruel tree,
I, who was dead, am living; no evil shall e'er betide
Those who, beyond or waiting, are pledged unto life with Me."

Now I wake to a holier Easter, happier than of old,
And again my voice is lifted in Te Deums sweet and strong;
I send it to join the anthem in the wonderful city of gold,
Where the hymns of the ransomed for ever are timed to the Easter song.

And I can be glad with the gladness that is born of a perfect peace;
On the strength of the Strong I am resting; I know that His will is best,
And who that has found that secret from darkness has won release,
And even in sorrow's exile may lift up her eyes and be blessed.

The House of Many Mansions.

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THE HOUSE OF MANY MANSIONS.

In my Father's house are many mansions.—John xiv. 2.

1. SIMPLER words than these it would not be easy to find in human language. There is nothing here either in the words or in the ideas which a child cannot understand. There is a Father, and there is a house of many mansions where He dwells; there is a Son who has been there, and can speak of what He knows and has seen. He has come to His brethren here for a time, and He is about to leave again for home. But He is not merely going home; He is going to prepare a place for His brethren, and He is coming back for them, when their place is prepared, to take them to it—to His Father's and His own home. If it were not so, He would have told us. That is simplicity itself: the words and the ideas alike strike a familiar chord in our hearts, and we need no one to explain them. What more do we need to know about the life to come than this? If we believe in God and in His Son, it is a going to the Father. Is it not enough for life and for death, for this world and for that which is to come, to know that we are going home?

2. But it is one of the characteristics of our Lord's teaching that, though it is within the reach of every man, it is beyond the reach of every man. The truths which are contained in these words are stated in forms which are intelligible to those who are incapable of speculative thought; but let a man of the most vigorous and adventurous intellect attempt to explore them, and he will find that year after year they will become more and more wonderful, and that they will always transcend the limits of his thought. The words of Christ have a meaning which can never be exhausted. He Himself had descended from the heights of God to the lowliest human condition; but through His lowly

human life those who had eyes to see discovered a Divine glory. His words were like Himself, lowly and simple, but through the lowliest and simplest of them there gleams the light of a diviner world than this. What these words mean we all know; explanation is unnecessary: what they mean none of us know; for as soon as we try to explain them we discover that explanation is impossible. We can travel a little way into the provinces of truth which they reveal, but our strength fails, and we can only sit down and wonder at the glory which lies beyond us.

¶ The Gospel of St. John will ever be the solace and joy of the Christian in his loftiest and his lowliest moods. He will always feel the truthfulness of the language in which the childlike Claudius describes his emotions while perusing this Gospel: "I have from my youth up delighted to read the Bible, but especially the Gospel of St. John. There is something in it exceedingly wonderful; twilight and night, and through them the quick flash of lightning; soft evening-clouds, and behind the clouds, the full-orbed moon. There is something, also, so high, and mysterious, and solemn, that one cannot become weary. It seems to me in reading the Gospel of St. John, as if I saw him at the Last Supper leaning upon the breast of his Master, and as if an angel were holding my lamp, and at certain passages wished to whisper something in my ear. I am far from understanding all that I read; yet it seems as if the meaning were hovering in the distance before my mind's eye. And even when I look into an entirely dark passage, I have an intimation of a great and glorious meaning within it which I shall one day understand."[1]

I.

The Father's House.

1. *The Father's House is both heaven and earth.*—The words are usually applied to heaven, and to heaven only; but we may give them a larger yet not opposing meaning, which blends harmoniously with the mind of Christ. There are two glories in the words of Jesus; the one is, that He made heaven so real, and the other is, that He made this present world thrill to its finest chord with the Divine. In spite of all the havoc sin had wrought, this world was full of God to Jesus Christ. There was God in

[1] W. G. T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Spiritual Man*, 169.

every lily of the field. There was God in every fowl of the air. In all the love of a mother for her child, in the hunger and thirst of the most sunken heart, there was that which spoke to Jesus of His Father, and told Him that the Divine was here.

(1) Perhaps it is best to say that in the mind of our Lord heaven and earth were not separate. And with us also there are rare moments when, standing upon this "bank and shoal of time," we feel that it is good for us to be here, and that the humblest place where Christ vouchsafes His presence may be none other than a house of God and a gate of Heaven. Disenchantment comes to the Christian worker as to other men. The rough experience of the world damps the ardour of the most courageous, and drives men to look above and beyond for what they do not find here. It is far easier to dream of a Paradise beyond the grave than to reform even a single abuse in this world. The belief, however, that looks forward to another state of being for complete fulfilment of Christ's promises is not irreconcilable with a persuasion that the words of Christ in the text point to a near, and not to a remote, future—that when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you," it is in this world, primarily at least, that we are to look for a fulfilment of His promise.

¶ As I read this profound, touching discourse of Jesus, I see no hint in it that the disciples were to wait for the hour of their death before being reunited to their glorified Redeemer. On the contrary, I find many an emphatic assurance that that reunion was to be soon. Over and over again, like a plaintive refrain, come the simple, consolatory words, "I go away and come again to you." "Now I go away to him that sent me." "A little while, and ye see me not, and again a little while, and ye shall see me." Separation, the Saviour insists, shall not be an eternal, shall not be even a protracted, severance. A short interspace of gloom there shall be—a preliminary hour of sadness. Then the broken link will be reunited, and the disciples will enjoy a fellowship with their Lord truer, because more spiritual, than they had ever known before.[1]

(2) Taking this to be the keynote of this part of our Lord's discourse, we see in it an assurance of speedy and almost immediate consolation. If we must fix some definite note of time for the fulfilment of the promise, everything points to the out-

[1] J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, 3.

pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. For it was from that day forward that the idea of Christ's life and death crept—and crept as a transforming power—into the study of the disciples' imagination, so that the old relationship between them and their Master was replaced by one more distinctly spiritual. Then the merely human tie was dissolved, and the Spirit manifested Christ as a hidden Power to their souls. Then they began to learn that because the Spirit which He sent down upon them was a Spirit proceeding from the Father, therefore in being reunited to Christ spiritually they became the inmates of that Father's home. Night and day is the Divine home open to all who by faith in Christ come to know themselves as children of the Heavenly Father. The household of that Father is wider than our poor thoughts about it. We enter it not through the grave and gate of death, but through a willing surrender of ourselves to God as dutiful children.

¶ The Apostles evidently understood their Master to promise that, when He had gone out of their bodily sight, He would come to them again in spiritual presence, and they would dwell with Him and the Father in a spiritual home; and after the Day of Pentecost they were accustomed to assume that the promise had been fulfilled, and that they were living as the Father's children with the other members of the Divine family, looking up to the Divine Son as their head.[1]

(3) Let us not think of any break at death. The course of life, life of the plant, the animal, the soul, is maintained along lines of uninterrupted continuity. To-day is born from the womb of yesterday, and to-morrow will be the offspring of to-day. There is nothing in Scripture or in nature to sustain the supposition that the highway of our life once begun is gashed with any abyss of meaningless suspension, that threads are broken and have to be knotted together again, and that the little territory we know as our present life is islanded from all that great continent of being that fills to the full the area of the eternal to-morrow. The soul's celestial life is not distinct from its terrestrial life save in the sense in which the blossom is distinct from the bud. We are never to be rooted out from those beginnings of spiritual life in which we are already planted and secured.

[1] J. Ll. Davies, *Spiritual Apprehension*, 351.

¶ The soul, like the plant, must be uncovered to the airs that blow across it from the distances, and bared to the baptism of the unfathomed sky by which it is overarched. The great world of spirit is nowhere if it is not here. The world of the blessed is not framed in walls. The beginnings of heaven are in the heavenly mind. This is part of the Father's house and here are some of the mansions. Having referred to some of the lesser blessings by which life is enriched Wordsworth goes on to say:—

Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise; . . .
But for those first affections
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence; truths that wake,
To perish never:
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither;
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.[1]

(4) Is there no comfort in this? Is there no consolation in the hour of sorrow?

¶ I once had a conversation with a lady who years before had lost her beloved husband. The relation between her and him had been emphatically a union of souls, one wherein the physical element had been very, very secondary. And yet when the hour of his dissolution arrived, and all that had been the visible expression of his personality, and all through which the tenderness of his devotion had sweetly disclosed itself, had been laid beneath the sod, the more material side of her nature at first asserted itself and for many days it remained the persistent and

[1] Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality.*

despairing passion of her heart to tarry by his graveside, and to seek comfort and to find a kind of companionship in clinging as it were to the silent and hidden memorials of a life that was done, of a spirit that was fled.

But one day looking upon the grave she suddenly said to herself: "The thing that lies there is not my husband. His spirit and his love do not belong to the realm of decay. Soul lives: love is one of the eternals." And there in the midst of an acre dedicated to corruption she gathered herself up from the morbid debility of despair, forsook the grave, bade a permanent good-bye to putrefaction, and in the sweet and chastened vigour of a nature to which a new revelation had come, flung herself out upon the support of the great love of the heavenly Father, and in quietness and absolute assurance went on into the years brightened and warmed by an experience of the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard.[1]

Faithful friends, it lies, I know
Pale, and white, and cold as snow;
And ye say: "Abdallah's dead"—
Weeping at the feet and head.
I can see your falling tears;
I can hear your sighs and prayers;
Yet I smile and whisper this:
I am not the thing you kiss!
Cease your tears and let it lie,—
It was mine, it is not I.

Sweet friends! what the women lave
For the last sleep of the grave
Is a hut which I am quitting,—
Is a garment no more fitting,—
Is a cage from which, at last,
Like a bird my soul has passed.
Love the inmate, not the room;
The weaver, not the garb,—the plume
Of the eagle, not the bars
That kept him from the splendid stars!

Loving friends, oh rise and dry
Straightway every weeping eye!
What ye lift upon the bier
Is not worth a single tear.

[1] C. H. Parkhurst, *A Little Lower than the Angels*, 226.

'Tis an empty sea-shell—one
Out of which the pearl is gone.
The shell is broken, it lies there;
The pearl, the All, the Soul, is here.
'Tis an earthen jar whose lid
Allah sealed, the while it hid
That treasure of his treasury—
A mind that loved him; let it lie.
Let the shards be earth once more,
Since the gold is in his store.

Allah glorious! Allah good!
Now thy world is understood—
Now the long, long wonder ends;
Yet ye weep, my foolish friends,
While the man whom you call dead,
In unbroken bliss instead,
Lives and loves you,—lost, 'tis true,
In the light that shines for you.
But in the light you cannot see,
In undisturbed felicity—
In a perfect Paradise,
And a life that never dies.

Farewell! friends—yet not farewell;
Where I go you, too, shall dwell.
I am gone before your face—
A moment's worth, a little space.
When you come where I have stept
Ye will wonder why ye wept;
Ye will know by true love taught
That here is all, and there is naught.

2. *The Father's House is heaven.*—When a saint draws near the appointed span of life, more and more do his thoughts go out to heaven. He dwells on heaven with an increasing joy, as you may read in many a biography. And it is, indeed, one of the last rewards of a life that has been spiritually true, that when the shadows of the twilight fall, it hails the glory dawning in Immanuel's Land. So it was with Jesus Christ our Lord. He did not hail the cross, He hailed the glory of which the cross was a God-appointed part. And ever, as He drew nearer to the end, He dwelt more intensely on Immanuel's Land, until at last for the joy that was set before

Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. For these reasons, as well as from the context, there is no doubt as to the first meaning of our words. Primarily, and as spoken to the Twelve, the House of the Father was the heavenly glory.

(1) And so, first of all, Christ's words give us assurance of life beyond death. Nothing evinces more conclusively the difference between Jesus Christ and other men who have lived and died upon the earth than the confidence and certainty with which He spoke of the invisible world. Not only is there no doubt or hesitation in His language, but there is no ignorance. He never says: "Now I know in part." On the contrary, we feel that He knew much more than He has disclosed; and that if He had chosen to do so, He could have made yet more specific revelations concerning the solemn world beyond the tomb. For all other men, there are two worlds—the one here and the other beyond. Their utterances respecting this visible and tangible sphere are positive and certain; but respecting the invisible realm they guess, and they hope, or they doubt altogether. But for our Lord, there was, practically, only one world. He is as certain in respect to the invisible as to the visible; and knows as fully concerning the one as the other.

¶ No mind unassisted by revelation ever reached the pitch of faith in the unseen and eternal that was attained by Socrates. But he was assailed by doubts; and he confesses his ignorance of the region beyond the tomb. After that lofty and solemn description in the Phaedo (113, 114) of the different places assigned after death to the good, and incorrigibly bad, and those who have led a middle life between the two, he adds: "To affirm positively, indeed, that these things are exactly as I have described them, does not become a man of discernment. But that either this or something of the kind takes place in regard to our souls and their habitation—seeing that the soul is evidently immortal—appears to me most fitting to be believed, and worthy of hazard for one who trusts in the reality. For the hazard is noble, and it is right to charm ourselves with such views as with enchantments." How different is the impression made upon us by these noble but hesitating words, from that which was made upon John the Baptist by our Lord's manner and teaching upon such points, as indicated in his testimony: "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he

hath seen and heard, that he testifieth." How different is Plato's dimness of perception, his merely hopeful conjecture respecting another life, from the calm and authoritative utterance of Him who said to Nicodemus: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." How different is the utterance of the human philosopher from that of Him who said to the cavilling Jews: "Ye are from beneath, I am from above; I go my way, and whither I go, ye cannot come; I proceeded forth, and came from God; Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" How different are the words of Socrates from the language of Him who in a solemn prayer to the Eternal God spake the words, blasphemous if falling from the lips of any merely finite being: "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Christ, then, speaks of heaven and immortal life as an eye-witness. The eternal world was no "dim, undiscovered country" for Him; and therefore His words and tones are those of one who was "native, and to the manner born."[1]

¶ I am persuaded that Tennyson and Lightfoot were right when they said that the doctrine of the New Testament is the doctrine of the other life. Many are the blessings that spring up, flower-like, in the track of faith. Here, by fidelity and by love, we may enjoy God as well as glorify Him; but the hope of the New Testament is beyond the years of time. As Bunyan put it, "Children, the milk and honey are beyond this wilderness."[2]

¶ Yes! of all words that have been spoken upon earth, these have done the most to dispel the darkness beyond the grave, and to give secure expectations to men as they approach it.[3]

For ever since from the portal
Of chaos came forth man,
The longing for life immortal
Hath coloured every plan.

Yes, life, new life, is ever
The surety that nature shows,
And to this one law for ever
The infinite system goes.

[1] W. G. T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Spiritual Man*, 171.
[2] W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, 166.
[3] Bernard.

So close up your ranks, my brothers,
And with hearts too high to fail,
Let us say "*Farewell*," while the others
On the other side cry, "*Hail*!"

(2) Again, the words tell us that we may conceive of heaven as a place. The disciples watched Jesus disappearing into the cloud which received Him out of their sight, and stood for a long time gazing up into the sky after Him as if expecting to catch another glimpse or see Him come back. Where did He go? We believe that He took with Him our human form, bearing even the marks of the crucifixion. He must be somewhere, and God's house in some sense must be a place. Doubtless we are usually too crass in our conception both of Christ and of heaven, and before it can be a place, heaven must be first a state; yet we can scarcely resist the conclusion that in some sense it must be a place also. If we, at least, are to live again and be clothed upon with our body which is from heaven, we must have some place to live in. God is a spirit, for Him a house seems not so necessary; but as for us, we must live somewhere, and the Father's house, into which at the last we are to be gathered, must be a place. Somewhere in His great universe, in the infinite realms of space, God must have a place which He calls His home—a house of many mansions to which, one by one, He welcomes His children.

¶ It is here distinctly implied that heaven is a place, a definite locality. I do not contend, indeed, that the phrase, "I go to prepare a *place* for you," of necessity involves the assertion of locality; for the word "place" may simply mean here, as elsewhere, space or room. But the whole description of heaven here given implies locality. It is a father's house, and there are many mansions, *i.e.*, residences in it; and the disciples are to have a *place* in it; and, what is equally suggestive, Christ has to go away from the earth to get to it, and to come back again to the earth to fetch His people to it. The whole of the discourse seems built upon the idea of definite locality.[1]

(3) But the words of Jesus tell us also that if heaven is a place, it is before that a state; it is the knowledge of heavenly things; it is communion with God, the vision of God as Father,

[1] W. Roberts.

and consciousness of ourselves as His children. He manifests Himself in many ways. The whole earth is full of His glory, but some of the manifestations are higher than others. From nature up to Christ He reveals Himself, and in heaven that manifestation will be perfected.

¶ Sometimes it is a pain that we know so little of God and of the things that are unseen and eternal; sometimes they lose their reality to us, and our vision of God is dimmed and obscured and clouded, our sense of His presence vague and dull, our consciousness of His Fatherhood fitful and uncertain. How seldom we truly feel at home with God! Like the Psalmist, we remember Him and are troubled; instead of the love and affection of the child there is coldness, distrust, and a sense of distance; we are not brightened as we should be by the perfectness of His sympathy and the abundance of His provision. In a world that is full of God, in lives that are daily loaded with His benefits, we fail so to see Him as to be made glad with the light of His countenance. Times there are, doubtless, when God is very near, and joy fills our hearts, and our devotion seems perfect; but for most of us, it is all our trouble that God is not nearer, consciously nearer, dwelling in our house, standing at our right hand, a source of constant inspiration and gladness. Oh, the pain of those days and hours when He seems to have forsaken us and left us to our own poor resources and devices, when we begin to wonder if we have ever known Him, if He has ever called us to His service, if He is really on our side to help and shield and strengthen us! Oh, those days, when we cannot pray, when the heavens are as brass, and no prayer will move in our hearts, and life seems joyless and labour in vain! If you have felt that pain, if ever in your heart you have known what it is to struggle for the consciousness of God's approval and the knowledge of His presence, it will be a kindling, inspiring, uplifting thought that the time is coming when we shall be children again in our Father's house, trustful, glad, free from fear—a household dwelling with God under the same roof, knit together as one great family brightened by the Father's presence. There will be nothing then to hinder our communion; there will be no days of darkness and uncertainty and doubt; we shall know God in His own home, know Him as children know their father in the freedom and unchecked familiarity of our common domestic life.[1]

3. *Heaven is home.*—In presence of the shadow of death which was casting its thick gloom over the company of the disciples in

[1] D. Fairweather, *Bound in the Spirit*, 155.

the upper room, Jesus pointed them to His Father's house of many mansions, where, after all the separations of earth, they would be gathered together with Him. So then heaven is only another name for home, that sacred, much-loved, familiar name which calls up thoughts we love to linger on, of all that is best and holiest in our life. There is nothing we know so much about, where it is, how it looks, the familiar walls and rooms and windows, the faces of loved ones who move about in it, inseparably bound up with our tenderest associations and brightest hopes.

¶ One of the first things of which we become conscious in this world is—home. It grows and clings around us with multiplied associations and deepening spell during all our growing years. To leave it is to young man or maiden sometimes like the pangs of death. To turn to it again in thought and desire from scenes of change and strife, or from the shores of a distant land, is like the daily bread of the heart, a part of religion itself. To *come home* again after absence—either in health and joy, laden with the fruits of prosperity, or wearied, and baffled, and sick, and dying—is the very instinct of the soul. Home! the soldier thinks of it on the battle-field, and the sailor on the stormy sea, and the traveller amid the strange scenes of a foreign land, and many a stricken man in the fever-ward of the hospital, and many a lonely wanderer of the street, and many a criminal in the jail. Visions of its freshness and purity come floating around some men all their life long; and follow them whithersoever they go. Sometimes, when they have gone all the allotted way, and the end is coming fast, they go back again in memory, and with instinctive and mysterious love, to the home of childhood, and its tender sunshine and its sweet shade come flickering over the dying bed, and often amid these simple hallowed thoughts the dying comes. The strifes and the honours of manhood are all forgotten, and the thirsty home-sick soul must drink at the fountains of the youthful time, and see in that light of heaven that "lies about us in our infancy," and so fall asleep like a child, unknowingly, rocked by a loving hand, in the cradle of death. Thus full many a time the first home becomes the type and the very threshold of the highest and the best. The wearied soul in its dreams and yearnings is seeking the first home, groping through the shadows of death to find the door, and looking for father's or mother's face, when lo! there is the glow and warmth of the heavenly "House," and chanting in the air the music of the new song, and the sweet light of the perfect love on every face, and for the newcomer the encircling of the everlasting arms! Oh, sweet sleep of death that

has such glad awaking! Happy close of life's day, whether it has been spent in storm or in calm, if it brings us safely within the portals of that house from which we shall go no more out.[1]

What joys are lost, what hopes are given,
As thro' this death-struck world we roam.
We think awhile that home is heaven;
We learn at length that heaven is home.[2]

4. How, then, is heaven a home?

(1) *The Father is there.*—It is the "Father's house." It is a paternal home. This is needed to make it a home in any sense; needed to give the heart rest either on earth or in heaven. Men who inquire into the facts and laws of the world, and find no God in it, have made themselves homeless. Men who have found human affection, but no God beneath it, have found only the shadow of a home. Thought and affection are shallow, short-lived things without Him who sets the solitary in families,—the Father of spirits. It is to teach us this that God has made a father's love the bond of a true human household.

¶ God will not only reveal Himself to us in wonderful ways, and give us a constant sense of His presence with us, He will reveal Himself as our Father. We can imagine many forms of Divine revelation that would give us no permanent delight, and that would contribute very little to the development of the higher forms of moral and spiritual perfection. It is possible to become weary of the grandeur and the vastness of some of the aspects of physical nature,—weary of the ocean, weary of the immensities of the starry heavens, weary of the roar and rush of the waters of Niagara, weary of the awful loneliness and desolation of the Matterhorn. They reveal God, but they do not reveal those elements of His life which are nearest to ourselves, which solicit trust, which create love, and which inspire delight. At *home* God will reveal Himself in other ways. There may be within sight the most majestic achievements of His power and wisdom; we may be environed with the most gracious illustrations of His delight in beauty; but we shall know Him as we have never known Him before—as our Father. He will be righteous,—but He will lay aside something of the awfulness of His righteousness; infinitely wise and strong,—but His wisdom and strength will appear, not in forms to oppress and confound us, but

[1] A. Raleigh, *Quiet Resting-Places*, 394. [2] Bishop Moule.

in forms to excite our wonder and delight. We shall be very near to Him—near as the children of a king to their father when he has laid aside for a time the pomp and cares of State, and is at once finding and giving joy among those who are dearest to him.[1]

¶ You recollect how Joseph, when he spoke with his brethren and asked them of their welfare, could not rest until he had drawn an answer to his question, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" And when the hope of seeing him was near, how he made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, and fell on his neck and wept; and Israel said unto Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." We may feel sure that the restored affection of his brethren, even Benjamin's, could not have filled the place in his heart had his father been no more; and the good of the land of Egypt would have been empty, and its glory gone, without his father to look on and share it with him.[2]

(2) *The children are there.*—It is one of the loveliest of the ideas of Christ that the Kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of the child. As men hover round a thought dear to them, and though they leave it still return to it, so Christ came back again and again to this as if He could never tire of it. Children were sacred in His eyes, the Kingdom of God belonged to them, and to them God revealed His secrets. Children were the examples and model of the Christian life. The disciples were to be as children. Except they became as little children they could not see the Kingdom. To be humble like them was to be greatest. When they prayed, they were to begin, "Our Father"; they were to live as children taking no thought for the morrow; and when they died, they were to go home to the Father's house and still be children.

¶ Do you want the key to the religious life? Most of you have it at hand in your own families. The Word of God is very nigh you if you have ears to hear it. Christ could find no better illustration of that trust and love and sympathy which should exist between God and us now, and no better illustration of the future life of communion between God and His saints, than that with which any happy home amongst ourselves can furnish us. Christ says we are to be young again: we are to be as children in the happy, free, unauxious days of old when no care crossed our

[1] R. W. Dale, *Christ and the Future Life*, 41.
[2] J. Ker, *Sermons*, ii. 258.

minds, and the world of thought and feeling had no perplexities, and all things were our own by the joy they gave us, by the love we bore them. These were the days when we inherited the earth: we had a kingdom fit for any king, greater than any possessed, and our wealth brought no pain or envy, because our hearts were simple and our minds were pure, and every day was bright, and everything a wonder. Does it not soothe our hearts, tired with pain and sorrow, with very weariness that nothing is fresh and new, that over all the dull light of commonplace is cast, when, in the light of Christ's words, we realize that God regards us still as children who will yet dwell with Him and with each other, one family, in His own house?[1]

(3) *Christ Himself is there.*—Our Lord has taught us to connect heaven with the thought of *Himself*—"My" Father's house. Heaven is the house of Christ's Father. It is as when an arch is built, and last the keystone is put in which binds it all into one; or as when a palace has been raised with all its rooms and their furniture complete, but it is dark or dimly seen by lights carried from place to place. The sun rises, and by the central dome the light is poured into all the corridors and chambers, and by the windows there are prospects over hill and valley and river. The Lord Jesus Christ is the sun of this house.

¶ Let us remember that these are *His* words. We must not take them rashly out of His lips or borrow them for ourselves, without considering very reverently that they belong in their first and proper sense to Him who is the only begotten of the Father, who was with God and was God in the beginning. As He left the world, Jesus said indeed, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." That *and* links us to Himself; but it is a bridge thrown across an infinite chasm, spanning the distance between the Divine and the human. For He had given it to be understood that God was "his own Father making himself equal with God." Heaven was to Jesus Christ "*My* Father's house"; by this title He brings it near to His disciples and lights it up with welcome.[2]

¶ Heaven is the Father's house of Jesus Christ; and as "a son over his own house," He invites His friends and promises them places in it,—He, the well-beloved, unto whom the Father has committed all judgment. "Father," He prayed in the hearing of these men, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be

[1] D. Fairweather, *Bound in the Spirit*, 157.
[2] G. G. Findlay, *The Things Above*, 187.

with me where I am"; and He said to the dying robber on the cross: "To-day shalt thou be *with me* in paradise." His word opens heaven to men His fellowship assures our place there as nothing else can do.[1]

II.

The Many Mansions.

The Greek word here translated "mansions" is the same as that in the 23rd verse of this chapter, where it is said, "We will come unto him, and make our *abode* with him." It is a somewhat uncommon word, not elsewhere found in the New Testament, and once only in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha. Possibly its use a second time in this chapter may not be unintentional. As the Father and the Son make an earthly abode in the hearts of those who prove their love by keeping Christ's commandments, so also shall heavenly abodes be prepared for those who love Him. There is an interchange, as it were, between earth and heaven, man abiding with God, and God with man.

Three things seem to be suggested by the phrase "many mansions"—Permanence, Spaciousness, Variety.

1. *Permanence.*—It is a place of "mansions"—both the English word and the Greek intimate this—a place where the dwellers shall abide, like a city to wanderers in the wilderness. "You have known Me," He says to His disciples, "for a few years, moving to and fro, but I leave you for the city of God, where you also shall enter in, to go out no more at all."

Indeed, the assurance of an *abiding* union fills the entire discourse. With this thought our Lord would soothe the hearts of His friends, and His own heart that suffered with them. He seeks in this way to heal the sore wound of their bereavement. A dreadful change is coming for them. They will be scattered, He tells them, as sheep without a shepherd—sheep in the midst of wolves! They are to be friendless, homeless, hunted, martyred men. But beyond it all, for them as for Him, there is rest, safety, permanence,—an everlasting home. "Him that overcometh will

[1] G. G. Findlay, *The Things Above*, 190.

I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more." This is the crown of comfort,—the promise of an *eternal* inheritance.

¶ The child asks you when you give him anything: "Can I have it to keep?" It is the immortal spirit within him that speaks. Here our Lord satisfies this immortal craving in man, and speaks of *abiding* places in the heavens—not tents, which you no sooner erect than you pull down again, and give back to the waste that spot which for a brief night you have associated with your hearth and home, but abiding places, from which we shall "go no more out for ever." Some time ago I revisited the village in which I was born. I looked for the chapel-house where as a child I spent many happy days. To my surprise, it was no longer there, but another house had been built on the same site. Then I turned to the garden where I had often played; but the greater part of it had been added to the adjoining graveyard. "Ah!" I thought, "there is no abiding home on earth, and every garden, sooner or later, has graves dug in it; but in my Father's house are many *abiding* places."[1]

¶ In Lord Tennyson's biography a story is related of Napoleon. A friend was urging on him how much more glorious the artist's immortality is than the soldier's. He asked how long the best-painted and best-preserved picture would last. "About eight hundred years," he was told. "Bah!" he exclaimed with contempt, "*telle immortalité*"—Such a poor immortality! It is my feeling. I want to live not for eight hundred years, nor for eighty times eight hundred, but for ever and ever. And God gives me my desire.[2]

2. *Spaciousness.*—"Neither pray I for these alone," Jesus said, referring to His first followers; "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." The heart of the Redeemer went out to the unnumbered multitude of all kindreds and tongues, who should wash their robes and make them white in His blood and pass through tribulation to His Kingdom. The Heavenly City is a place of vast dimensions and boundless hospitality. Jesus is not afraid of inviting too many guests.

Death is not a closing so much as an opening—not a falling so much as a rising—not a going away so much as a coming home. It is the passing of a pilgrim from one mansion to another, from the winter to the summer residence, from one of the outlying provinces up nearer the central home. "In my Father's house are

[1] D. Davies. [2] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 377.

many mansions." This is not a *chance* expression, far less a mere figure of speech. There are many other expressions quite as large. We read of the *third* heavens, as if there were heavens above heavens, and again heavens above those. We read of Christ having "passed through all heavens" on His upward way, "that he might fill all things." And of "heaven, even the heaven of heavens," a place evidently spoken of as being of inconceivable grandeur and largeness, for it is said that *even* that cannot contain the infinite presence of God.

¶ The Vatican is the largest palace in the world, with more than eleven thousand apartments. Nicholas v. (1447–55), the builder Pope, wished to make it the centre from which all the messengers of the spiritual empire should go forth. His aim was to unite in that palace all the Government offices and the dwellings of the cardinals. He died before he could carry out his vast design, and only a portion of it has ever been completed.

3. *Variety.*—Out of the idea of vastness arises almost necessarily the idea of an endless variety. At least it is so in this world. And surely we must not think of heaven as less than earth. The variety existing in God's works here is one of the principal charms of the natural world. Not only has every country in the globe its distinctive qualities and natural productions, but within any one country what variety exists! In the land of our birth, without crossing any sea, we can find the region of perpetual snow, and some favoured spots where the flowers never die; ruggedness in one place, beauty in another; productiveness here, sterility there; and a never-ending variety running through the whole. No two faces in all the world, no two trees, no two flowers, no two blades of grass, could be pronounced exactly alike. Then we are almost bound to apply the analogy to the future life, and to believe that as there are "many mansions," so the furnishing and adorning of them will be very various. One will not be as another. There will not only be *room* for all, but *interest* for all.

¶ Do not the words "many mansions" bear witness to us of the largeness of God's love, and the infinite varieties of His redeeming grace? May we not behold there the great intellect, now emptied of all pride? and the dull intellect, now learning, as it never learned in life, the wondrous things of God's law? and,

again, the penitent whose sins were as scarlet, but are now white as snow; who wandered far from his Father's house, and felt the mighty famine, and almost perished with hunger, but at last—at last came to himself; and arose and came to his Father, and was welcomed with a warmth he had never dared to expect, and now in one of those "many mansions" yearns that others too may return while yet there is time? Yes! and there must be "places of abiding" where those who knew God but dimly learn to know Him more; where the poor and the neglected marvel at the breadth and depth of the gospel; where the children who died in infancy marvel at the blessedness of their elders who came out of great tribulation, and wonder what was that strange earth which has been the scene of so many tears, and so much repentance; where those who in early boyhood have slept in Jesus can see that the call was a summons of love, and that the blow which well-nigh broke the hearts of parents, and saddened the musings of companions, saved them from perils unsuspected, and kept them safe in Christ's arms.[1]

(1) There is variety of *Race*.—The Father's house is ample enough in its great hospitality to receive all God's children from far and near. In it there are many abodes, many dwelling-places; within its hospitable shelter there will be room for saints of all ages and types and beliefs, of all nations and kindreds and tongues. They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven.

(2) There is variety of *Disposition*.—Was there ever a little company of men more diverse in disposition than the Twelve? That little company who followed Christ would almost seem to be the world in miniature. Thomas was there, the man of melancholy, who haunted the dim margins of despair. Peter was there, with his big and generous heart, swift to act, equally swift to speak. Philip was there, practical and cautious; and Simon Zelotes, a fiery insurgent. And John was there, with a mighty heart on fire, and ready to call down fire on the Samaritans, and yet even already, under the grace of Christ, taming its passion into the flame of love. Would there be room in heaven for all these, so diverse and so different from each other? If they quarrelled as they journeyed to Jerusalem, would the New Jerusalem hold them all in peace? We can picture

[1] H. M. Butler, in *Sunday Magazine*, 1880, p. 308.

Jesus at the table, smiling upon that strangely assorted company, and saying to them, "Let not your heart be troubled: in my Father's house are many mansions."

¶ There was an article in a religious weekly the other day, suggested by the recent death of Mark Twain. The article was headed, *A Land of No Laughter?* In other words, as the writer put it further on, "Can we find a place for laughter in heaven, or is it a land of no laughter?" The point is that it could be put in that way at all.[1]

(3) There is variety of *Experience.*—There are those who have often doubted their acceptance and forgiveness, who have walked in darkness and with difficulty stayed themselves on God, questioning whether they might not in the end be castaways; and it stands inscribed, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." There are those who have felt the want of the likeness they should bear to God, and of the love and gratitude which should bestow it on them. They take home to themselves the reproach, "Their spot is not the spot of his children: is not he thy Father that hath bought thee?" For them it is written, "Ye backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings." "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads." There are those who have felt all through life as if God were turned to be their enemy, and were fighting against them. Their desires have been thwarted, their hearts pierced through and through with losses and crosses and cruel wounds, and failure upon failure has followed their plans. But it is written, "Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth"; and under it, "All things work together for good to them that love God." And there are those who have yearnings of heart to feel God's presence close and constant, to hear Him and speak with Him, and be sure He is not, as some would say to them, a voice or a vision or a dream of their fond imagination. They have felt it at times so certain that they could say, "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" But clouds roll in on the assurance, and the voice seems far off or silent, as if it were among the trees of the garden; and it is toward evening, and there is doubt and fear. But it shall be "as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even

[1] R. Whyte.

a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain"; and His name shall be written as the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

¶ By comparing my experience with that of others, you may perceive how different ways God leads different souls. But though a man should be led in a way different from that of all other men: yet, if his eye be at all times fixed on his Saviour; if his constant aim be to do His will; if all his desires tend to Him; if in all trials he can draw strength from Him; if he fly to Him in all troubles, and in all temptations find salvation in His blood —in this there can be no delusion. And whosoever is thus minded, however or whenever it began, is surely reconciled to God through His Son.[1]

Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all,
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold,
Rend each man's temple's veil and bid it fall,
That we may know that Thou hast been of old:
Gather us in.

Gather us in: we worship only Thee;
In varied names we stretch a common hand;
In diverse forms a common soul we see;
In many ships we seek one spirit-land;
Gather us in.

Each sees one colour of Thy rainbow-light,
Each looks upon one tint and calls it heaven;
Thou art the fulness of our partial sight;
We are not perfect till we find the seven;
Gather us in.

Thine is the mystic life great India craves,
Thine is the Parsee's sin-destroying beam,
Thine is the Buddhist's rest from tossing waves,
Thine is the empire of vast China's dream;
Gather us in.

Thine is the Roman's strength without his pride,
Thine is the Greek's glad world without its graves,
Thine is Judæa's law with love beside,
The truth that censures and the grace that saves;
Gather us in.

[1] *John Wesley's Journal* (Standard Edition), ii. 47.

Some seek a Father in the heavens above,
Some ask a human image to adore,
Some crave a spirit vast as life and love:
Within Thy mansions we have all and more;
Gather us in.

The Reliability of the Redeemer.

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The Reliability of the Redeemer.

If it were not so, I would have told you.—John xiv. 2.

One of the most striking traits of the teaching of Jesus is its reticence concerning many things which one would like to know. Through all Christian history people have gone to the Gospels for answers to questions which seemed to them of the highest importance, and concerning which churches have quarrelled, and they have been met by silence. It is the same with the first disciples of Jesus. They bring Him their questions about His own fate, and He answers, "Let not your heart be troubled: I go to prepare a place for you." They ask Him whither He is going, and He replies, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you," as though it were not necessary that He should tell them more.

¶ I have wondered most of my life why Christ spoke these words at the time He did. They seem unsatisfactorily explained, whether connected with the first clause of the phrase or with the last clause. Dr. Marcus Dods comments: "Had there been no such place and no possibility of preparing it, He necessarily would have told them, because the very purpose of His leaving was to prepare a place for them." Somehow this does not find me. Neither is Dr. John Ker, also a writer of genuine insight, much more satisfactory. He says: "There might be some misgivings in their minds, and these words are thrown in to quiet them. Had you been deceiving yourselves with falsehood, I should have felt bound to undeceive you." It is along these tracks that most of the explanations run.

But should we not rather say that Christ spoke these words with a smile? "If it were not so, I would have told you. You know My way by this time. It has been My wont to check and thwart and dash your hopes. Things you desired, things you believed, things you dreamt of mightily—I have told you over and over again that they were not so. Now you are right at last. You thought that there were many mansions in the Father's

house. You clung to that faith when the rest went. I knew it all the time, and I never said a word to contradict you, because it was a true and sure hope, truer and surer and sweeter than you knew. If it had not been so, I would have told you; but it is so. This time you may let your hearts go free; beyond death there are no disappointments."[1]

Still on the lips of all we question,
The finger of God's silence lies;
Will the lost hands in ours be folded?
Will the shut eyelids ever rise?
Oh, friend, no proof beyond this yearning,
This outreach of our hearts we need;
God will not mock the hope He giveth,
No love He prompts shall vainly plead.
Then let us stretch our hands in darkness,
And call our loved ones o'er and o'er;
Some day their arms will close about us,
And the old voices speak once more.

There are many matters in the short parenthetical sentence, and they all make for strength. Let us touch four things—Christ's Knowledge, His Tenderness, His Confirmation of our Human Instincts, and His Encouragement.

1. *Christ's knowledge.*—The text is a simple parenthesis in the midst of one of His greatest teachings, but it seems more than the most elaborate argument. He is speaking about the future life as the hope and consolation of those whom death bereaves, and He affirms concerning it some very definite things—things which are a clear addition to human knowledge about it. And the manner of His affirmation is as remarkable as its matter. He calmly assumes His own certain knowledge. He is not an inquirer about the unseen world. He does not, like Plato, rest His teachings upon reasonings and probabilities. He speaks with absolute certainty. Clearly He believed Himself to have certain knowledge.

We have in this testimony of Jesus our surest guarantee of the existence of the heavenly world. Others have guessed, hoped, dreamed, speculated, poetized about heaven: *Jesus knows.* For He has come down from heaven. The world into which our dead

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, 155.

pass one by one, the veil closing instantly behind them without a sign or token sent back to tell us how they fare, the world into which our prayers are sent evoking no audible response—He has dwelt in that world, ruled over it, and is the Master of its secrets; and He calls it *paradise*, He calls it *My Father's house*. "I speak unto you," He says, "the things that I have seen with the Father. . . . We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." So He declared to Nicodemus, referring to heavenly as well as to earthly things. How these quiet words of Jesus reassure us, bewildered with the haze of our modern doubt!

¶ Away down in the darkness, in the heart of the great steamer, the engineer stands. He never sees how the vessel moves. He does not know where she is going. It is not his duty to know. It is his only to answer every signal, to start his engine, to quicken or slow its motion, to reverse it, just as he is directed by the one whose part it is to see. He has nothing whatever to do with the vessel's course. He sees not an inch of the sea.

It is not our part to guide our life in this world, amid its tangled affairs. It is ours just to do our duty, our Master's bidding. Christ's hand is on the helm. He sees all the future. He pilots us. Let us learn to thank God that we cannot know the future, that we need not know it. Christ knows it, and it is better to go on in the dark with Him, letting Him lead, than to go alone in the light, and choose our own path.[1]

Who knows? God knows: and what He knows
Is well and best.
The darkness hideth not from Him, but glows
Clear as the morning or the evening rose
Of east or west.

Wherefore man's strength is to sit still:
Not wasting care
To antedate to-morrow's good or ill;
Yet watching meekly, watching with goodwill,
Watching to prayer.

Some rising or some setting ray
From east or west,
If not to-day, why then another day
Will light each dove upon the homeward way
Safe to her nest.[2]

[1] J. R. Miller, *Glimpses through Life's Windows*, 85.
[2] C. G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 138.

2. *Christ's tenderness.*—"If it were not so, I would have told you." It is a parenthesis of singular significance and emphasis, full of human considerateness and tenderness. It is a measure of the greatness of the revelation which He was making to them. He would not trifle with this great human hope of immortality. Had there been no such satisfaction for it He would have told them. It was impossible for Him to deceive them with a false or uncertain hope, or to permit them to be deceived. He came to teach them about spiritual realities, and this was one of them.

¶ Somewhere in the East Tennessee mountains a craggy bluff of limestone rises sheer from the plain, some five hundred feet in height. At its base lies the peaceful valley stretching away into the distance. A storm gathers on the horizon. The clouds fly rapidly together, the lightning leaps, there is one terrific thunder-clap. The bluff echoes the roar of the storm. Down on the side of the bluff a stunted bush is growing from the scanty soil that has drifted into a fissure of rock. On the bush a bird sits and swings and sings. The bluff echoes the song of the bird. At the base of the cliff a little child has fallen on the stones and is crying over the hurt of the fall. The bluff echoes the child's cry. Yonder in the cabin door a woman sits at her work, and as she works, the words of an old hymn float out on the open air. The bluff echoes the woman's hymn. Christ is like the echoing bluff. He catches every note that issues from human hearts, and in responding He joins the strength of the rock to a tenderness that beats swift and helpful sympathy for every sob and song that trembles in the air about Him.

3. *Christ's confirmation of human instincts.*—There are some beliefs embedded in the native soil of our hearts; they grow there of themselves, and we need no proof of their existence or reality. One of these is the hope of immortality. No savage so barbarous, no religion so material, as to be without its hope and its paradise, and its realms of the blessed, where there is rest and peace after the toil and battle of life. And Jesus in adding, "If it were not so, I would have told you," seems to guarantee to us as correct interpreters of God's mind to men these deep instincts of human nature. He who ever told His disciples the truth, who kept back nothing that was for their good though He should pain and shame them thereby, would surely have told them if these hopes of

future blessedness were doomed to disappointment. It is impossible that Christ should deceive.

¶ The unspeakable value of these words of the Lord Jesus is that they vindicate a native and ineradicable instinct of the soul. They set His seal on the sanctified use of the imagination in religion. They proclaim the soul to be a freedman of the universe, with a right to exercise its faculties in picturing to itself an authentic ideal. "In my Father's house are many mansions; *if it were not so, I would have told you.*" As though He had said, I know you have your dreams of God, of heaven, of a perfect life beyond the tumults of time and the river of death. You think of Him as the Father, the Holy One and the Good, too wise to err, too good to be unkind; whose love is as the salt sea, "washing in pure ablution round earth's human shores," whose mercy is infinite as the sky; whose will for all is eternal life;—you dream of a state where that holy will is ideally done, and where the spirits of just men made perfect serve Him day and night in blessedness. And these dreams are true; "If it were not so, *I would have told you.*"[1]

4. *Christ's encouragement.*—Life for many of us is grey and dim. Let the glory of eternity break through the clouds. We are wanting, many of us—how many!—in decision, in earnestness, in elastic energy: let us find vigour where a thousand saints have found it—at the fountain of immortal strength. Life is full of disappointments; the horizons narrow with the advancing years: let the sadness sometimes forget itself in the anticipation of eternal joy, and the poverty in the anticipation of eternal wealth. The hopes that look for fulfilment within these mortal years often fail, but the great hope is beyond the reach of vicissitude and peril; and while we are learning with sorrow the narrowing limits of our mortal strength, let us exult in the ages which are to bring a perpetual expansion to all our powers and to all our joys. Half a gospel will never give any man the whole of the Christian redemption. In the gospel of Christ, life and immortality have been brought to light, and a universal spirit that should distinguish the children of God, a magnanimous superiority to the vicissitudes of this earthly life, the courage to attempt great duties, and the fortitude to bear without complaint great sorrows—these come not merely from the pathetic memories of the past, from the incarnation of Christ, from His sorrows, from His death, but from

[1] E. Griffith-Jones, *Faith and Verification*, 220.

the endless ages of righteousness, of wisdom, of peace, of joy, and of glory, that Christ has promised us in the home of God.

¶ He has brought life and immortality to light. Trusting Him, we can think of our bereavements calmly, and look forward joyfully to the hour of our departure. For those who believe in Christ, death is not annihilation but victory, not separation but reunion; it is not the soul's extinction, but its birth into a brighter, purer, larger life. It means "ease after toil, port after stormy seas," home after changeful, perilous journeyings, the frail tents of the wilderness exchanged for the shining gates and undecaying walls of the city of God.[1]

> As it were better, youth
> Should strive, through acts uncouth,
> Toward making, than repose on aught found made;
> So, better, age, exempt
> From strife, should know, than tempt
> Further. Thou waited'st age: wait death nor be afraid![2]

[1] G. G. Findlay, *The Things Above*, 210.
[2] Browning, *Rabbi ben Ezra.*

The Preparation and the Reception.

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The Preparation and the Reception.

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.—John xiv. 2, 3.

One does not wonder that the disciples were troubled when told that their Master was about to die. There is no anguish so sharp and desolating as that which bereavement causes. He who had been to them infinitely more than friend or brother, whom they had loved with a love having all the reverence of worship and all the intensity of passion, whose life had been their ideal of goodness, whose love had been their blessedness, whose Divine teaching and working had been their glory—He was about to be taken from them; they are to be bereaved of more than affection ever lost before. Never had sorrow so great an occasion. The grief of bereavement is measured by the greatness of possession. Only those who had known Him could know what it was to lose the man Christ Jesus. Therefore "sorrow had filled their hearts," the depth of which was attested alike by the vehemence of St. Peter and the tenderness of St. John. His comfort for them was, trust in Him as the immortal Christ, who would go to prepare a place for them, and come again to receive them to Himself.

I.

The Preparation.

"I go to prepare a place for you."

These words are so simple that a child or an unlettered peasant might understand them. Christ has gone to prepare a place for us in the house of His Father; what more need we

know? This is enough to give us the exhilarating hope and joy which are necessary for righteousness; this is enough to invigorate the faith which is agitated by the mysteries that environ us; this is enough to sustain the fortitude which is likely to give way under the recurring shocks of earthly trouble.

1. *The Going.*—It is not so much the going as the preparation that is in His mind. Yet what a way was that by which He had to go. It was the way of Gethsemane, and the judgment-hall, and Calvary; it was the way of the cross and of the grave; the way of the resurrection and the ascending on high. It was thus He opened the Kingdom of heaven to all believers, and thus He rendered possible for us life in the Father's house.

(1) He goes because He first came. Christ came into this world not as a native but as a visitor, a messenger from another sphere. "I go my way," He cries, "to him that sent me." He returns to His rightful place, as a voyager setting sail to his native shore, as a son wending his way joyfully homewards when the task on which he set out is finished. What poets and philosophers have sometimes imagined concerning man, that he has descended by the passage of birth from some diviner realm of which he brings dim recollections with him, that

> Trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home,—

this was true in a sense deeper and grander than they had imagined, in the case of the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. He came from the bosom of the Father.

Nothing is more evident from the narrative of the Gospels than that Jesus made this claim; nothing is more certain than the fact itself, if His words are in any wise true. Listen to Him: "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." Language cannot be plainer or more positive than this. The gates of birth and of death alike are transparent to Jesus Christ; through both He sees His Father's heaven.

(2) He goes because for our sakes He must go. It was necessary to part, necessary to leave them behind; nothing else would have snapped the chain which held them to this visible life

which they knew, and in which they had known their Master; nothing but losing Him, and knowing why they had lost Him—that He had gone to prepare their place, the place where at last they should be with Him, and where He was with the Father for ever. He went up on high: and then with tears and with great joy they understood the lesson that to give Him up was not to lose Him. Then they knew that to have Him out of sight was to have Him none the less. Then they knew that they parted with Him on earth to have One whom they had followed and conversed with, on the throne of heaven. Then they perceived that though their work and their sufferings might be for a while on earth, they themselves belonged to where their Master was gone; the place prepared for them was nothing less than the unutterable and never-changing glory into which He was withdrawn.

¶ Wherever He would have His disciples go, He goes first Himself, and through the door which He has opened He draws them by His love. That is the whole philosophy of Christian culture. And that is the meaning of the Incarnation. God entered into human life; made Himself one with it as He only could have done with a nature that was originally one with His own. He became man as He could not have become brute or stone. Then in that human nature He outwent humanity. He opened yet unopened gates of human possibility. He showed what man might be, how great, how godlike! And by the love and oneness He has always been claiming man for the greatness whose possibility He showed.[1]

2. *The Preparation.*—"If I go," He said. But "go" is a cold word. It tells of parting. There is a sigh of desolation in it, like the moaning of the wintry wind as it sweeps through the leafless branches of the trees in the dead of night. It was a word which filled the heart of the disciples with sorrow. They thought it the coldest word that they had ever heard from Him. It seemed to hang like an icicle upon the lips of the Christ. Only the satisfaction that He was going to prepare a place for them made the word bearable. "I go to *prepare*" are His words. To go, then, does not mean to forget. Christ's exaltation is an exaltation to service. No trouble will be too great for Him in our interests. "Prepare." God believes in preparation. He

[1] Phillips Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, 179.

did not place man on earth without having first prepared the earth for him; and as the ages move we are more and more impressed with the extent of the preparation. From this we can understand better the meaning of the word "prepare" as applied to heaven. And, more, we can see better why our Lord should speak of "*abiding* places." A home which takes so long in preparing must not be a transient one. In the Divine economy there is always a sublime relation between the means and the end.

¶ When a guest is coming to the house, the hostess prepares. The rooms are there, the furniture is there, but the thoughtful, tender-hearted woman has something to do beyond making them ready. She prepares for the guest. This, she says to herself, is his favourite flower, his favourite book, and that little touch of kindness makes the welcome perfect. It may not be much that she is able to do, but the little means that she would fain do all. So Christ prepares for Peter, prepares for John, prepares for Thomas. He knows what they like, and He does not forget. So He prepares for His people through the generations till the end arrives.[1]

¶ I remember how once travelling in Syria the guide upon whom we wholly depended disappeared. By and by he came back to us as we rode along and told us where he had been: that in the village which we were approaching, and where we were to spend the night, his family lived; that he had ridden on to see that they were ready to receive him and to prepare quarters in their house for us, the travellers under his charge, and now came back to conduct us thither; and by and by he brought us where he belonged, and where through him provision had been made and a welcome was waiting for us.[2]

(1) There are two remarkable things about this statement. The first is that the master should prepare for the servant. This upsets the ordinary course of procedure. You are expecting to entertain some chosen friends. All your appointments are made; you have sent before your face servants in whom you have confidence, and have told them to do as you have commanded, that all things may be in readiness for the invited guests. This is customary; this is considered right. But Jesus Christ says to His servants,—such poor, incomplete, and blundering servants, too,—"I, your Lord and Master, go to prepare a place for you."

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, 169.
[2] Phillips Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, 173.

This is quite in keeping with the method which Jesus Christ adopted in His ministry. This is no exceptional instance of condescension, self-ignoring, self-humiliation. He took a towel, girded Himself, and washed His disciples' feet and dried them, and having finished this lowly exhibition, He said, "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." I have given you an example. So His whole life was a humiliation.

¶ Suppose we had a near relative and friend who had long been away in far-distant lands. At length he determined to return home, and settle down quietly after his long, and tiresome, and wandering life. He wrote to us to provide a house for him, to prepare it, to furnish it completely, and even to lay out the grounds, all ready for his arrival and immediate occupation. That preparation would cost us very grave anxieties. How carefully we should endeavour to recall his old disposition, his old fancies and partialities! We should provide everything that we imagined could be pleasing to him. We should be all the while thinking about him. And yet, when we had it all ready, if a mutual friend should come to look over the house and grounds, he would see a great many signs of our own peculiar taste, our own individual preferences. We could not help making the house a little expression of ourselves, and a little expression of our friend. So it must be with the Lord Jesus. He is preparing a place for us, and He is thinking of us; of our real wants, and of our varied wishes. But all the while He is impressing His own character upon it; He is filling it with indications of His own likings and sympathies. And the exceeding charm of our Heaven will be to us this: it will be so largely, and so evidently, *Christ's* Heaven, but at the same time it will be so manifestly *our own* Heaven—Christ's preparation, but prepared *for us*.[1]

(2) The second remarkable thing about the text is that the Divine being, God the Son, should ever have occasion to "prepare" anything. To prepare may signify to get ready, to put things in order, to look after arrangements, appointments, and the like, so as to have all things in due proportion and relation, that the eye may be pleased, that the ear may be satisfied, and that all our desires may be met and fulfilled. Jesus Christ talks in the text as if there were a good deal of work for Him to do somewhere, and He must make haste and get it done. Go to prepare? Can

[1] R. T. *Light for Life's Eventide*, 27.

He who fills infinitude and breathes eternity have anything to do in the way of arranging and ordering and getting things ready for His servants. He accommodates Himself to our modes of thinking. He does not always "throw the infinite at us." He often steps out of His tabernacle of glory and talks our own speech,—makes a child of Himself that He may be understood in this little rickety nursery of a world. He knows we are all in the cradle still, that the mightiest speaker among us is only a lisping babbler, and that He must continually break up His words, in order that He may convey the very dimmest hint of His unutterable meaning!

¶ There are some things which only the Master can do. Will you go and prepare summer for us? You might try. You have seen half a hundred summers: now you go and try to make the fifty-first! Come! You are an artificer: you have the organ of form largely developed; you have an eye for beauty; you can buy oils and paints and colours and canvas and brushes of all kinds. Why don't you go and prepare summer for us? The great Master, looking down upon this little under-world of His—this basement-storey of His great building—says, "I am going to prepare the summer for you." And He makes no noise, He makes no mistakes in His colours, never gets things into discord. He continually renews the face of the earth, and not a man in all the busy, boastful world can do it! If the servant cannot prepare the summer, how could he prepare heaven? If the saint exhausts himself when he lights a candle, how could he fill the great heavens with the morning that should never melt into sunset?[1]

II.

The Reception.

"I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

"If I go, I come again" (He uses the present tense, not the future), "that where I am, there ye may be also." There is the Father's house, there is the place prepared, and there is the coming of the Christ to take us to our place. He will not leave His disciples to find their own way; He will come again and receive them to Himself, that they may abide with Him for ever. The

[1] J. Parker.

going was preparatory. It was with a view to returning, and the returning, again, is with a view to the final reunion of all with Himself. "If I go, I come again."

1. *The Coming.*—There are many comings of Christ to the world, and to the individual. The words no doubt refer to the Second Advent, but the promise must not be limited to that one coming which is the consummation of all comings. In many ways and times Christ has come and is coming. From the day He ascended to His Father, He has been continuously coming, manifesting Himself as the risen Lord and the life-giving Spirit to the Church and the world. The signs of His advent are everywhere around us. Christ has come again already, and come to dwell. His is an abiding presence. "Lo," He said, "I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age." Especially is there one coming of Christ to us which we all await with mingled feelings of awe and fear and hope. May we not say that death is for each individual a true coming of Christ, that through it Christ's words, "I receive you unto myself," have a true fulfilment?

When our Lord departed, to confirm our assurance He returned again for a little while, with the keys of death and the grave hung at His girdle; He "shewed himself alive after his passion," Master of both worlds, "Lord of both the dead and the living," and moving as He would this side or that the veil. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ we know that there is an exit from the grave, and that our holy dead live unto God. Paradise is no fable then; the celestial hills gleaming beyond the dark river are no cloudland born of our wishes and our fancies. When Jesus speaks of His Father's house, He does not invite us to a castle in the air, to some palace in the fairyland of childhood, but to that which is the most certain and solid as it is the most glorious of realities. It is this world that is unsubstantial, that is the realm of dreams and shadows. "The things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal." The earth beneath our feet is but a little flying dust, the everlasting mountains fade and dissolve as the morning mists that cover them; we look for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

He will come again!
Sometime He will surely stand once more
On the earth which His own hand hath made—
Only never as before,
Weary, lonely, and in pain,
As the Lamb on whom our sin was laid—
Stretching out His hands in vain,
All the day,
To a people gone astray.

He will come again!
O, the word
Which our joyful ears have heard
Cannot fail, nor pass away.
He hath spoken! It shall be!
Our expectant eyes shall see
Him for whom we watch and wait,
Coming soon to claim
All whose trust is in His name—
For the hour is growing late;
Time wears on,
And the little while is almost gone.

He will come again!
In the hope our hearts grow strong—
Strong to bear the watching and the strain
Of the time between—
Strong to bear His cross—to undertake,
For His sake,
All the burdens of the day—
All the roughness of the way—
Reaching out toward the things unseen—
Finding not our rest below—
Counting all the joys of earth,
All things here,
Sometime dear,
Of but little worth,
Since we know
That at His appearing we shall see
All the glory, and the light—
Hidden now from human sight—
Of the risen One,
And, beholding, in His likeness be,
While eternal ages run.[1]

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 68.

2. *The Reception.*—One of the best tests of the truth and reality and vigour of our Christian life lies in this, that when we anticipate the great life to come, however far speculation may endeavour to trace its course in the province of that mysterious land, we return to this thought, which satisfies completely all the deepest and best desires of our hearts,—that where Christ is, we are to be also. But there is a personal delight in these words of Christ's: His joy would be incomplete if we were not with Him in the Father's house. It would diminish our gladness, our anticipation of supreme bliss, if we did not know that our presence with Him would heighten His own happiness. He is not so absorbed in the splendours of His Eternal Throne, or in the great tasks which belong to Him as the Lord of the heaven and the earth, as to be indifferent to the affection that binds Him to us and to God. Nor is He so absorbed even in the blessedness of His eternal fellowship with the Father. If on the one side of His nature He is eternally one with God, on the other side of His nature He is eternally one with us; and fellowship with us, in the perfection of our righteousness and the perfection of our blessedness, is as necessary to the heavenly glory of Christ as His fellowship with the Father Himself. The joy that was set before Him when He endured the Cross, despising the shame, was this,—that He might redeem us from sin; and knowing as only He knows the blessedness of living in the eternal love of God, He wanted us in our measure to know that blessedness likewise.

Heaven is the Father's house, where we shall be young again, the ideal home life here revived and sanctified, where friend will meet with friend, where the many mansions will extend their ample hospitality to people of every kindred and tongue and nation; yet even this is not the chief feature of that life to come. Its chief feature is the fellowship not of friend with friend, but of all with Christ—"That where I am, there ye may be also." The Father's house is not a perfect place to Christ until He gathers into its mansions all those for whom He died. Not until He has His loved ones beside Him where He is, and has made them what He is, will He be satisfied. That is heaven,—to be with Christ, to see Him as He is, to be as He is. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we

shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

¶ The Tannese called Heaven by the name Aneai; and we afterwards discovered that this was the name of the highest and most beautifully situated village on the island. Their best bit of Earth was to them the symbol and type of Heaven; their Canaan, too, was a kind of prophecy of another country, even a heavenly Canaan. The fact that they had an Aneai, a promised land, opened their minds naturally to our idea of the promised land of the future, the Aneai of the Gospel hope and faith.[1]

¶ I used to think of heaven and its golden streets and pearly gates, and it was the place I thought of; but as I grew older and my loved ones passed on before, my thoughts of heaven changed altogether. I no longer think of the place, but of the great company I shall meet there, of my Poly. boys who have gone home, of the mother who loves me none the less because her love has been made perfect in her Saviour's presence. I believe that when our opening eyes first pierce the mysteries of that land beyond the river, our first feeling will be a deep inward sensation of being at home; the surroundings that are so often antagonistic to our better nature will be gone: there will be no more sea.[2]

¶ Let not thy heart be troubled; in the vast spaces there is a home for *thee*. The Son of Man has gone before; there is a region prepared for humanity. There is a spot in this stupendous universe where human nature dwells. That spot is thy one comfort, thy one glory. No other glory would make up for it. There may be golden streets and pearly gates and sapphire thrones. There may be rivers clear as crystal, and trees rich in foliage, and flowers full of bloom. There may be suns that never set, and hands that never weary, and lives that never die. But about these many things thy heart is not troubled. One thing is needful, without which all were vain—the sympathy of a brother's soul. Content mayest thou be to have no revealing of the many lights in the upper chamber, since thou hast been allowed to gaze on one glimmering light of love—"I go to prepare a place for you."[3]

¶ Dr. Story, speaking of his last interview with Mrs. Oliphant, then on her death-bed, says: Her voice was still strong with its old, familiar tone; her wonderful eyes were as lambent as ever; and her mind was as calm and clear as a summer's sea. "I am dying," she said, "I do not think I can last through the night."

[1] *John G. Paton*, i. 121. [2] *Quintin Hogg*, 309.
[3] G. Matheson, *Searchings in the Silence*, 212.

Thinking of the "Little Pilgrim" and the "Seen and the Unseen," and the many touching efforts her eager imagination had made to lift the impenetrable veil, I said, "The world to which you are going is a familiar world to you." "I have no thoughts," she replied, "not even of my boys; but only of my Saviour waiting to receive me, and of my Father."[1]

The city's shining towers we may not see
With our dim earthly vision;
For Death, the silent warder, keeps the key
That opes the gates Elysian.

But sometimes, when adown the western sky
A fiery sunset lingers,
Its golden gates swing inward noiselessly,
Unlocked by unseen fingers.

And while they stand a moment half ajar,
Gleams from the inner glory
Stream brightly through the azure vault afar,
And half reveal the story.

O land unknown! O land of love Divine!
Father, all-wise, eternal!
O guide these wandering, way-worn feet of mine
Into those pastures vernal![2]

[1] *Memoir of Robert Herbert Story*, 288.
[2] Nancy Priest Wakefield.

The Way, the Truth, the Life.

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THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.—John xiv. 6.

1. THE words of Christ immediately preceding the text seem to have been obscure and puzzling to the Apostles. Apparently they were not yet persuaded that their Master was shortly to die; and, accordingly, when He spoke of going to His Father's house, it did not occur to them that He meant passing into the spiritual world. His assuring words, "that where I am, there ye may be also," therefore fell short. And when He sees their bewilderment written on their faces, He tentatively, half interrogatively, adds, "And whither I go, ye know the way." Unless they knew where He was going, there was even less consolation in the promise that He would come for them after He had gone and prepared a place for them. And when He thus challenges them candidly to say whether they understood where He was going, and where He would one day take them also, Thomas at once replies, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" This interruption by Thomas gives occasion for the great declaration, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

2. Some people find it hard to trace the connexion between way, and truth, and life; and that difficulty was well expressed by Maldonatus in the pithy saying, "If Christ had been less liberal in explanation, we had less labour in exposition." The three terms, *way*, *truth*, and *life*, are not co-ordinate, as Luther and Calvin hold, *i.e.* beginning, middle, end; neither do they express a single notion, as Augustine's *vera via vitae*; nor does Reuss seem to express quite accurately their relation when he combines them, by defining *the way* as the means of arriving at truth and life. The phrase may be interpreted, according to

Lightfoot and others, as a Hebraism equivalent to "the true and living way"; but it is better to take the two latter phrases as explanations of the former. Jesus means to say: "I am the means of coming to the Father, *because* I am the truth and the life."

I.

Christ the Person.

"I am."

The distinguishing feature and the chief glory of this wonderful declaration of Christ lies in its personal element. The special force of the utterance lies not in the words, "the way, and the truth, and the life," but in Christ's resolving their whole meaning into Himself. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." It is this presentation of a Person, as concentrating within Himself all that can be embraced in the all-comprehensive words, "the way, and the truth, and the life," that constitutes the grand peculiarity and the chief wonder of the text.

1. Man's need is satisfied only by a person. If anything is obvious in our everyday experience, and in the history, both secular and religious, of mankind, it is that in the formation of character, in great social changes, in shaping the destiny of our race, the great factor is not abstract truth, system, or form, but living, thinking, willing beings—mind acting on mind, heart on heart, life on life. This is human nature—on the one hand, an obvious and universal susceptibility to the influence of the person; and, on the other, such influence at all times and in all directions at work, moulding character and gradually determining the great changes that mark our history. Take home life. What is moulding the natures there, and day after day shaping the future man and woman? Is it the acknowledged regulations of the house, the teachings out of book, or lip, or is it the teacher—the verbal lessons of the mother, or the mother herself? Take school life. This moulding, this gradual ripening is going on with obvious reality there; and what is doing it? The books, the maps, the desks, the forms, the cane? No. It is the teacher and

the companions that are training and stamping the future man. Take a wider view of life, and the same lesson is as clearly taught. Who can calculate the personal influence of Confucius, of Zoroaster, or Mohammed? What may be fairly traced, in the Christian era, to the spirit and life of Paul, of Augustine, of Calvin, of Luther, of Wesley? In politics, what is well done or worth doing without a leader in whom the party fully trusts? In war, who can exaggerate the potency of the captain? What would have been our recollections of Waterloo in the absence of Wellington?

¶ In general the progress of mankind has not been gradual, but sudden, like the burst of summer in some ice-bound clime. Still less has it been a common effort of the whole human race. If we take away two nations from the history of the world; if we imagine further that the six greatest among the sons of men were blotted out, or had never been, the peoples of the earth would still be "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death." The two nations were among the fewest of all people: scarcely in their most flourishing period together amounting to a hundredth part of the human race. The golden age of either of them can hardly be said to extend over two or three centuries. The nations themselves were not good for much; but single men among them have been the teachers, not only of their own, but of all ages and countries. If the Greek philosophers had never existed, is it too much to say that the very nature of the human mind would have been different? We can hardly tell when or how the sciences would have come into being; many elements of religion as well as of law would have been wanting; the history of nations would have changed. So mighty has been the influence of two or three men in thought and speculation—the world has gone after them.[1]

¶ The intense devotion which the Vaishnavas feel for Rama is merely another proof that, East and West alike, the greatest moulding force is a great personality. In the former days of the British Raj great personalities, especially in the army, had free play. They remained long years in the country, and won not only the loyalty, but, as in Nicholson's and Sir Henry Lawrence's case, the devotion of the natives. The almost universal complaint now is that natives are not brought sufficiently into personal relations to their rulers, but are governed too much by red tape and machinery. The importance which the natives attach to personality was seen, as Sir Bampfylde Fuller points out in his

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 284.

Studies in Indian Life and Sentiment, in the great loyalty felt by millions of natives towards Queen Victoria, of whom most of them knew nothing more than the name. But she was a Person, and embodied the idea of the British Raj in a way that appealed strongly to them. They recognized gratefully her sympathy shown in comparatively trivial acts, such as her learning Hindustani in order the better to understand her Indian subjects.[1]

2. Christ supplies man's need of a leader. He is a person. His teaching is unique, because of the personal authority which He claims for Himself. Other teachers have been content to obliterate themselves that they may magnify the truths they come to teach, but Jesus speaks of Himself. He tells us who He is and why He is come. He puts Himself before His teaching. He did not only preach the gospel; He was the gospel. In this thing Jesus sets His religion over against all other religions. Buddhism, as has often been pointed out, is the religion of a method; Mohammedanism is the religion of a book; Christianity is the religion of a person. It *is* Jesus. Whosoever enters it, enters Him; whosoever would learn its lessons, learns Him; whosoever would feed upon its nourishment, eats His body and drinks His blood. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

¶ Plato is not Platonism; Platonism might have been taught though its author had never lived. Mohammed is not Islam; the Koran itself would warn us against any such confusion between the teacher of its doctrine and the substance of the doctrine itself. But Christ Himself is Christianity; His teaching is inextricably bound up with His Person; and it is not merely because He taught what He did, but because He is what He is, that through Him we can come to the Father.[2]

3. Christ would not be so great a person if He were not more than man. It is by reason of His Divinity that He is Perfect Man. By Him things were said which were never before and never have been since ascribed to any other being on earth—things which it is impossible to reconcile with any theory short of His perfect humanity and essential Deity. No wonder those who heard Him were astonished at His teaching, struck by the authority with which He spoke. None among their prophets, not even the greatest, Moses or Elijah or the Baptist, had ever

[1] C. Field, *The Charm of India*, ix. [2] Canon Liddon.

dared to say, "I am," as Jesus so often did. "I am the light of the world"; "I am the bread of life"; "I am the good shepherd"; "I am the door" of the fold; "I am the resurrection and the life"; "I am the true vine." What did He mean as He spoke thus? There is only one explanation. It certainly was not in a spirit of self-assertion, for He was "meek and lowly in heart." He, in coming to earth, "made himself of no reputation"; He came not to be a master but to be a servant. Why was it, then? It was because He was a Divine as well as a human Teacher.

¶ In very truth the claims of Christ are more eloquent of what He is than any assertions that can be made about Him. Wonderful to tell, it is His very greatness that is our security. If He were less than He is, we might be afraid of Him.

> But greatness which is infinite makes room
> For all things in its lap to lie:
> We should be crushed by a magnificence
> Short of infinity![1]

4. Every word in the text is emphatic and remarkable. It is not, "I teach the way; I declare what is true; I reveal or announce the life to come." Not that; but "I *am* the way, and the truth, and the life. I am all this, in a sense quite distinct from My prophetic teaching. I, *personally*, am the way to God. I am Myself embodied truth. I have in Myself the source and springs of immortal life." That by "the way" He means "the way to God" is clear from the relation of the last clause of the verse to the first. "I am the way;—no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jesus does not simply assert, then, that He reveals and opens this way to the eye of the reason by an authoritative message; that He sets it forth in His discourses; that, by word and speech, in sermon and parable, He makes known to man in what way he may approach God, have communion with Him, enjoy His favour and friendship, and be ultimately admitted to His presence and glory in the upper world. It is not that, or that only, that He does. All this He may do, but there is something else and something more. He does not merely teach the way, He *is* the way. He not only says what is true, He Himself *is* the truth. He does not merely

[1] A. W. Robinson, *The Voice of Joy and Health*, 45.

utter, in the Divine name, the promise of eternal life, He *is* the life.

¶ In his *Jottings from the Pacific* (p. 83), Mr. Gill speaks of a native preacher in Rarotonga who referred to the custom at a great wedding for the bride to walk to her new home over the prostrate bodies of her husband's clan, whilst the bridegroom made a similar progress over his wife's people. Then came the application: "Tread boldly, brethren, on the prostrate body of Jesus: for He is our only way to the Father. Trust your entire weight with all your burdens on Him; He will not wince or cry. Only thus shall we safely arrive at the home of the redeemed."

¶ A beautiful story is told of Agassiz. When he was a boy his family lived on the edge of a lake in Switzerland. One day the father was on the other side of the lake, and Louis and a younger brother set out on the ice to join him. The mother watched the boys from her window. They got along well till they came to a wide crack in the ice. The taller boy leaped over easily, but the other hesitated. "The little fellow will fall in," the mother said, "and drown." But as she watched a moment she saw Louis, the older boy, get down on the ice, lay himself across the crack, his hands on one side and his feet on the other, and make a bridge of his body. Then the little fellow climbed over him in safety to the other side, and both the boys ran on to find their father.[1]

II.

Christ the Way.

"I am the way."

1. *The necessity of a way.*—(1) To be taught the way to God is man's supreme need. We instinctively use the figure, even though we know that it is but a figure. Moral distance is naturally represented by spacial distance. The sinner is pictured not only by Christ but by himself as in a far country; and though God be not far from any of us, men feel after Him, like the blind who have lost their way, if haply they may find Him. To reach God is the confessed goal of human life. To know the way to Him is our chief necessity. So testifies the history of all religions

[1] J. R. Miller *Our New Edens* 27.

that have ever held sway over humanity. So testify the longings and felt needs of every thoughtful heart. God is necessary for our happiness. Life is unfinished until it is in harmony with God. Only in God can we be satisfied and saved. And so the cry of all earnest, awakened souls the world over is for God.

¶ Livingstone, who waded waist-deep through pestilential marshes for weeks, to die at last in a miserable hut by the lake shore; the traveller, who has to cut his way for hundreds of miles through tangled forest and jungle at the rate of half a mile a day; the emigrant, who has to cross the trackless alkali plain, and who may perish midway; the military commander, who has to carry his forces over mountains, some sections of which are almost perpendicular,—know how a well-engineered path is the first condition of successful movement.[1]

¶ You remember the character of Calista in one of Cardinal Newman's finest tales, the story that contains the wonderful picture of the locust plague in northern Africa, and her cry, "Oh, that I could find Him! On the right hand and on the left I grope and touch Him not. Why dost Thou fight against me, O First and only Fair?" And you remember the same longing expressed in one of Matthew Arnold's essays, in which he quotes —Mr. Hutton says he could not have been the first to use them —the words of Israel: "Thou, O Eternal, are the thing that I long for. Thou art my hope, even from my youth." And you remember the passionate expressions of this longing in the Psalms: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." And nothing appeals to us quite so much, I think, as we read the lives of good men as those great experiences in which they have entered at last into the fulness of the consciousness of God.[2]

(2) If, then, man is so desirous of coming to God, what stands in his way? He is estranged by sin from filial fellowship with the Father. A few false and fatal steps have served to separate him from the fountain of eternal good. Every proud, unaided effort he may make to return only increases the intervening distance. Man and his Divine Father are lost to each other,

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Imperfect Angel*, 248.
[2] R. E. Speer, *The Master of the Heart*, 211.

moving in diametrically opposite planes. The Father mourns the alienated trust, love, and service of His rebellious child. The child no longer feels the rest, strength, rapturous awe once realized in the manifested presence of the Father. All the restlessness of ambition and all the disappointment that lurks in achieved success, all the fever that burns in the gold-hunt, and all the sickness of heart that leads man, after he has exhausted the last ambition on his programme, to lie down and long to die, are the inarticulate cries of this bitter orphanhood. Sin hides the Father's face.

¶ In the innermost part of the tabernacle—the Holy of Holies—the visible symbol of God's presence rested between the cherubim, and over the mercy-seat. This part of the tabernacle was divided from all the other parts by a thick and curiously-wrought veil. Through that veil, none might pass but the high priest, and he, only once a year, and with blood. The Holy Ghost this signifying, that sinful man may not approach a holy God.

2. *Christ is the way from man to the Father.*—The great difficulty is—How is sin to be put away? Many attempts have been made to remove it, but there is no way of escaping from the guilt of sin except by Jesus Christ. Some have hoped for pardon from future good conduct, but the payment of a future debt can by no means discharge a past debt, so that even the perfect future obedience of man could not touch his past sins. Self-righteousness, therefore, even if it could reach perfection, would not be "the way." Some hope much from the mercy of God, but the law knows nothing of clearing the sinner of guilt by a sovereign act of mercy—that cannot be done; for then God's justice would be impugned, His law would be virtually annulled. He will by no means clear the guilty. Every transgression must have its just recompense of reward, so that the absolute mercy of God as such is not the way out of the guilt of sin, for that mercy is blocked up by avenging justice, and over the face of that star of hope called absolute mercy there passes an eclipsing shadow, because God is righteous as well as gracious. There is no way by which a sinner can escape from the guilt of sin but that which is revealed in Jesus Christ.

¶ In proclaiming Himself "the way," Christ pronounced Himself able to effect the most real union between parties and condi-

tions as separate as heaven and earth, sin and holiness, the poor creature I know myself to be and the infinite and eternal God who is so high I cannot know Him.[1]

Thou art the way.
Hadst Thou been nothing but the goal,
I cannot say
If Thou hadst ever met my soul.

I cannot see—
I, child of process—if there lies
An end for me,
Full of repose, full of replies.

I'll not reproach
The way that goes, my feet that stir.
Access, approach,
Art Thou, time, way and wayfarer.[2]

(1) Christ is the way for *all*.—Unless there be a road which the many can travel, unless Christianity can in a very real sense be made easy and popular, it fails of its purpose. If the treasures of its truth are at the disposal of only the wise and the clever, they need hardly have been revealed at all: there must be a way into the heart of them open to all, so that even the wayfaring man need not err therein, so that even the simplest need not despair of attainment.

¶ A road is an essentially democratic thing: all ranks and kinds meet and jostle there; there are few explorers, few excavators, few mountaineers, few aeronauts, but there are many wayfarers, and the road is for them all.[3]

¶ Astronomers tell us that, inconceivably vast as is the distance of some of the fixed stars, there is no point in the universe to which the influence and attraction of our sun does not extend. Christ's mediating and restoring influence overflows every circle of conscious life, and touches the last extreme of degradation.[4]

(2) Christ is the way *now and for all time*.—The mind of man always seeks in the distance what the word of God presents close at hand. Thus Martha relegated to the far future the hope of her

[1] Marcus Dods. [2] Alice Meynell, in *The Mount of Vision*, 31.
[3] J. M. E. Ross, *The Self-Portraiture of Jesus*, 189.
[4] T. G. Selby, *The Imperfect Angel*, 249.

brother's resurrection, and Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life." So here, Thomas claims that he does not know the way although it is there before his eyes, and Jesus has to explain to him: "I am the way." But Christ was not the way only to Thomas and the other disciples. As is often the case with the words of Christ, we can hear beneath them a more general truth than the disciples recognized. Jesus was the *present* way for the disciples, and He is the way for us *for all time*. All that Christ said to the Apostles on the eve of His Passion He has said and still says to men in every great crisis of history. The trial to which the first disciples were exposed was peculiar in its form rather than in its essential character. It was the trial which belongs to every period of transition. It was the trial which presses and will press most heavily upon our generation. And if we in our turn would face it, and come out victors from the contest, it can only be by listening with absolute devotion to the revelation of Christ which makes clear to us that there is a purpose running through all the ages and broadening upwards to the threshold of a Father's home; that there is an abiding reality underneath the shifting phenomena of the world which cannot be lost: that there is a law of coherence, of progress, of growth uniting in a harmonious whole movements, efforts, energies which appear to us to be broken, discordant, conflicting: it can only be by claiming for our own direct instruction, as charged with a new meaning and reaching to new realms, the words with which Christ answered the appeal of St. Thomas: "*I am the way.*"

¶ It is a way that never has been broken up, and never will be. All the floods of all His people's sins have never made a swamp or bog-hole in this blessed way; all the earthquakes and upheavals of our rebellious natures have never made a gap or chasm in this glorious way. Straight from the very gates of hell, where the sinner is by nature, right up to the hilltops of heaven, this glorious causeway runs in one unbroken line, and will for ever and for ever, till every elect one shall be gathered safe into the eternal home.[1]

(3) Christ is *the only way*.—"I am *the* way." The saying has a negative as well as a positive aspect, an excluding as well as an assertive force; yet there is nothing arbitrary in this assertion,

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

nor is it a warning against presumption. Christ is not announcing conditions on which a man shall be allowed to approach the Father, and threatening with rejection those who fail to observe them. He does not declare that no man may, but simply that no man does, come to the Father unless it be through Him. He is not a kind of angel standing at the gate of the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword, saying, "You cannot come to the Father and the happiness of heaven unless you come in just the way I point out." We are mistaken if we interpret this text in any such narrow and exclusive way as this. Christ does not say, "You must not come unless you come by Me." He says that, in point of fact, no man does come except by Him. It is the broad and general declaration that there is no coming to the Fatherhood except as men come through the knowledge of the Son; that men have not come to a knowledge of the Father unless they have come through the revelation made by Jesus Christ His Son.

¶ A pupil applies for admission to the Packer Institute, and asks to study logarithms. And the President answers, "You must begin with arithmetic." "But I don't like arithmetic; I don't want to study arithmetic; I want to study logarithms." "You cannot study logarithms unless you first study arithmetic." The pupil says, "I think that is very mean. I think it is a narrow and bigoted rule that I cannot study logarithms unless I first study arithmetic." The President replies, "There is no other road. It is not possible for you to come to an understanding of logarithms unless you take the only way men ever will enter into that knowledge—namely, the way of arithmetic."[1]

I am the way!
Lo, as of old, one Voice is ever speaking;
Yet, all the day,
Still earnest souls another way are seeking.

Who, save the Son,
Our condemnation in His body bearing—
With us made one—
Our likeness in His Father's presence wearing—

O who, save He,
Could lead us safely through the night of sadness,
With Him to be,
Through an eternity of rest and gladness?

[1] Lyman Abbott.

Lord, we have heard:
Thou art the Way, and in Thyself confiding,
We trust Thy Word;
We trust ourselves in all things to Thy guiding.[1]

(4) Christ is *the way and the end.*—Here a question arises, which has often been asked: How can Christ be the way? The way is the means to an end. When the end is gained, the means may be discarded. In common material things this is so. What we desire is the end; we choose the means solely with a view to the end; there is no significance or value in the means except as introductory to the end. But in higher things we cannot thus sharply distinguish means and the end: the search after truth has a worth in itself, the way to life is itself life; the way and the end are one.

¶ Here in Cambridge we are scholars all; teachers or learners; or rather teachers and learners at once. Learning is no doubt a mean—a mean whereby we may be enabled to serve God and our country in Church and State. Yet learning is not only a mean even to this high end, much less to those low grovelling ends which, by a corruption of language unknown to our founders, are called the rewards or prizes of knowledge. No single result is the satisfying fruit of labour, but the labour itself, steadily moving onward day by day, and proving itself not to be in vain, is the best proof that God's blessing is upon us. The work of education is the end and the reward: and that teacher and that student will labour restlessly and slavishly, not with a free and hearty enthusiam, who do not lose themselves and all distant ends in the engrossing enjoyment of the work itself.[2]

III.

Christ the Truth.

"I am the truth."

1. Were these words merely equivalent to "I speak the truth," it would be much to know this of One who tells us things of so measureless a consequence to ourselves. The faith of the disciples

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 14.
[2] J. E. B. Mayor, *Sermons*, 9.

was being strained by what He had just been saying to them. Here was a man in most respects like themselves: a man who became hungry and sleepy, a man who was to be arrested and executed by the rulers, assuring them that He was going to prepare for them everlasting habitations, and that He would return to take them to these habitations. He saw that they found it hard to believe this. Who does not find it hard to believe all that our Lord tells us of our future? Think how much we trust simply to His word. If He is not true, then the whole of Christendom has framed its life on a false issue, and is met at death by blank disappointment. Christ has aroused in our minds by His promises and statements a group of ideas and expectations which nothing but His word could have persuaded us to entertain. Nothing is more remarkable about our Lord than the calmness and assurance with which He utters the most astounding statements. The ablest and most enlightened men have their hesitations, their periods of agonizing doubt, their suspense of judgment, their laboured inquiries, their mental conflicts. With Jesus there is nothing of this. From first to last He sees with perfect clearness to the utmost bound of human thought, knows with absolute certainty whatever is essential for us to know. His is not the assurance of ignorance, nor is it the dogmatism of traditional teaching or the evasive assurance of a superficial and reckless mind. It is plainly the assurance of One who stands in the full noon of truth and speaks what He knows. For every question which our most anxious and trying experiences dictate He has the ready and sufficient answer. But more than this is contained in His words. He says not merely "I speak the truth," but "I am the truth."

2. Our Lord has declared that He is Himself the truth. We are to discover in Him all we can learn of the ultimate nature of things Divine and human, all we can need to know of the mystery of the universe and the meaning of our lives.

(1) *Christ is the truth about man.*—"I am the truth," said Christ. Our attitude in respect of that saying of His is determined by our belief as to His person. It is revealed in Scripture, and accepted by the Church, that God in becoming man took upon Him the nature of humanity at large, that He

united to Himself not the personality of a favoured individual, but the nature of the race. Thus He represents in Himself all men, past, present, and to come, with their gifts and their achievements no less than their troubles and their tears.

He shows us what man is, and what man may be. We measure ourselves over against Him, and for the first time we realize ourselves. We hold ourselves aloof from Him, and our ideals seem glorious, and our attainment passable, and our sins venial. We measure ourselves against Christ, and we abhor ourselves in dust and ashes. We stand up face to face with Him who is the truth about man, and for the first time we understand what we are—all the misery and the flaw of our lives, all the shame and the loathsomeness of our shortcomings. And we look up into His face once again, and we see there not alone what we are, but what we may be. We hear Him speaking of Himself as the Son of Man; we hear Him telling us that the Father sent Him to show what in the Father's mind we are, and that we may hide ourselves in Him. Jesus Christ is to us the truth about ourselves as we are and as we may be.

¶ Christ's unique power as a teacher of morals lies in the fact that He embodied in His own life His whole teaching. Did He teach the love of God and man? His life expressed just that; for His whole career was nothing but the utterance of love to God and to man. Did He teach the duty of personal, sincere, absolute righteousness? Did He teach humility and meekness and purity? Did He say, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise"? Did He say, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you"? All this was pictured in His own condition and character for the admiration and imitation of mankind. He could say, "I am the truth."[1]

¶ Though Goethe's history be known but imperfectly, the *Faust*, with what there is of teaching in it, will live. Though Dante's sad life-path be never followed, we can still tremble at the *Inferno*, or drink hope from the *Purgatorio*, and from the *Paradiso* consolation. Though dim to our minds the life-struggle of Shakespeare, we shall still weep and wonder at *Portia*, at *Hamlet*, at *Lear*. The message—such as it is—comes, though the messenger be withdrawn into shadow. Not so with Christ. He is absolute truth.[2]

[1] G. T. Purves, *The Sinless Christ*, 129.

[2] W. J. Knox Little, *Sunlight and Shadow*, 28.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought.[1]

(2) *Christ is the revelation of God.*—He was God manifest in the flesh. It is common to say that Christ was the great Revealer of God, who, by His inestimable instructions, has made us acquainted with the Divine character and will. Now this is true, but it is not the whole truth, nor yet indeed the chiefest and most blessed portion of the truth. He was not only the Revealer of God, but He was Himself the revelation of God. Not merely did He say things about God which are written in a Book, not merely did He inspire His servants to write in that Book still other things which they came to understand only after He had left them, by the illuminating influence of His Holy Spirit, but He was the Book Himself.

He is the Truth in reference to the Divine nature. That Truth, then, is not a mere matter of words. It is not only His speech that teaches us, but Himself that shows us God. His whole life and character, His personality, is the true representation within human conditions of the Invisible God; and when He says, "I am the way, and the truth," He is saying substantially the same thing as the great prologue of this Gospel says when it calls Him the Word, and the Light of men, and as St. Paul says when he names Him "the image of the invisible God."

¶ This is the function of the Son of Man, to give men their Heavenly Father, the Father whom He knew, the God with whom He lived in communion, in the personal relations of Spirit with spirit. To preach theologies would have been no new thing; to preach theologies in the belief that through them we are making acquaintance with realities is an occupation and an illusion of which the world never wearies; but to have the living God mirrored in a human soul, as face answers to face in a glass, this was not the old work of announcing abstract truths about God, it was to reveal God Himself. We have no means of knowing God except by knowing His image in our own nature. The knowledge of God was lost to the world, because the image of God had been lost out of the soul. Christ, through obedience to the inward promptings, kept the mirror pure, without flaw or

[1] "In Memoriam."

soil, and so manifested the Father in the Son. There is no other mirror, to which we have access, in which He can spiritually be seen as He is. Other mirrors, as those of outward Nature, are dead mirrors, which have to convey their symbols to a living soul there to be interpreted. How could we know God if we saw Him only in the reflection of a soul that is itself unclean, clouded, distorted? If there had been no unsoiled mirror, we could have known God under no adequate living type. "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."[1]

IV.

Christ the Life.

"I am the life."

The phrase, "I am the life," points to all Christ's work upon us as a life-giving Spirit, a Quickener and an Inspirer. Dead men cannot walk a road. It is no use making a path if it starts from a cemetery. Christ taught that men apart from Him are dead, and that the only life that they can have by which they can be knit to God is the Divine life which was in Himself, and of which He is the source and the principle for the whole world.

Thou art the Life!
All ways without Thee paths that end in death;
All life without Thee with death harvest rife;
All truths dry bones, disjoined, and void of breath:
Thou art our Life![2]

1. *Christ is the life of the body.*—We may take Christ's words first of all in their most literal meaning.

(1) "I am the life."—It is a tremendous claim for any man at any time to make, and He who makes it here is about to die. But as the Apostles listen, startling deeds of His come back to their recollection—His healing of the sick, His restoring of the dying, and His raising of the dead.

It is a plain fact of history,—true as the decrees of truth are

[1] J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, 13.
[2] E. R. Charles.

true,—that everything which ever came into the presence and contact of Christ, when He was upon the earth, lived. No corpse was ever under the influence of that high touch, but it took again its vital power. When He met the dead body upon the road, when He was in the same room with the dead child, when He stood at the mouth of the grave of a dead man—and those are the only recorded occasions of His intercourse with death—death retired and life came back.

¶ See the poor woman in the crowd, who has spent all her living on seeking health, and has spent that living in vain. She comes behind the great Teacher, in the crowd secretly, saying, "If I do but touch his garment I shall be made whole." She had tried every other resource, gone to every other professed healer, had been filled with disappointment, and she was about to give up in despair; and in that critical hour of her experience, she touched the Saviour and was healed.[1]

Around Bethesda's healing wave,
Waiting to hear the rustling wing
Which spoke the angel nigh, who gave
Its virtues to the holy spring,—
With earnest, fixed solicitude,
Were seen the afflicted multitude.

Among them there was one whose eye
Had often seen the waters stirred;
Whose heart had often heaved the sigh—
The bitter sigh of hope deferred;
Beholding, while he suffered on,
The healing virtue giv'n and gone.

No pow'r had he; no friendly aid
To him the timely succour brought;
But while his coming he delayed,
Another won the boon he sought;
Until the Saviour's love was shown,
Which healed him by a word alone.[2]

(2) Christ is also the life, from the fact of His own resurrection. When Christ says: "I am the life," He does not mean, "I lived the perfect life on earth"; He means, "I, through the very fact of My death, am the life for evermore, and as a symbol of this,

[1] J. Parker. [2] B. Barton.

witness My death and resurrection." Never was one born into the world like Him. Other men are born to live, to act, to do; He was born to *die*. But the death which cast its shadow over the Eleven and over Himself should itself be swallowed up in life. Standing there beneath the shadow of His cross, before the open grave over which the stone was to be rolled to hide His burial, Jesus Christ, the frailest life in the world, declared to men, "I am the life."

For three-and-thirty years, a living seed,
A lonely germ, dropt on our waste world's side,
Thy death and rising Thou didst calmly bide:
Sore companied by many a clinging weed
Sprung from the fallow soil of evil and need;
Hither and thither tossed, by friends denied;
Pitied of goodness dull, and scorned of pride;
Until at length was done the awful deed,
And Thou didst lie outworn in stony bower
Three days asleep—oh, slumber godlike-brief
For Man of sorrows and acquaint with grief!
Life-seed Thou diedst, that Death might lose his power,
And Thou, with rooted stem and shadowy leaf,
Rise, of humanity the crimson flower.[1]

2. *Christ is the spiritual life.*—He did not only say, "I am the living One," as if He meant to affirm His own immortality. That was indeed true, but it was clearly not His only idea in this place. But Jesus said, "I am the life," the life, that is, of renewed souls, the power which alone can make humanity truly live, the moral and spiritual vital force of the Kingdom of heaven.

(1) Christ is the life *now*. The eternal life of the spirit is not altogether a future blessing, which we are to get from Christ hereafter, but a present blessing too, which we are to look for from Christ now. It is Jesus Christ who brings us into connexion with this source of life eternal—He bears it in His own person. In Him we receive a new spirit; in Him our motive to live for righteousness is continually renewed; we are conscious that in Him we touch what is undying and never fails to renew spiritual life in us. Whatever we need to give us true and everlasting life we have in Christ. Whatever we need to enable us to come to the

[1] George MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, i. 257.

Father, whatever we shall need between this present stage of experience and our final stage, we have in Him. The more, then, we use Christ, the more life we have. The more we are with Him and the more we partake of His Spirit, the fuller does our own life become. It is not by imitating successful men that we become influential for good, but by living with Christ. It is not by adopting the habits and methods of saints that we become strong and useful, but by accepting Christ and His Spirit. Nothing can take the place of Christ. Nothing can take His words and say to us, "I am the life." If we wish for life, if we see that we are doing little good and desire energy to overtake the good that needs to be done, it is to Him we must go. If we feel as if all our efforts were vain, and as if we could not bear up any longer against our circumstances or against our wicked nature, we can receive fresh vigour and hopefulness only from Christ.

O ancient streams, O far-descended woods
Full of the fluttering of melodious souls;
O hills and valleys that adorn yourselves
In solemn jubilation; winds and clouds,
Ocean and land in stormy nuptials clasp'd,
And all exuberant creatures that acclaim
The Earth's divine renewal: lo, I too
With yours would mingle somewhat of glad song.
I too have come through wintry terrors—yea
Through tempest and through cataclysm of soul
Have come, and am deliver'd. Me the Spring,
Me also dimly with new life hath touch'd,
And with regenerate hope, the salt of life;
And I would dedicate these thankful tears
To whatsoever power beneficent,
Veil'd though his countenance, undivulged his thought,
Hath led me from the haunted darkness forth
Into the gracious air and vernal morn,
And suffers me to know my spirit a note
Of this great chorus, one with bird and stream
And voiceful mountain.[1]

(2) Christ is the life *for ever*. Not only is He the life in us now, but through Him and in Him we never die. Our souls rise up in war against the thought of ending, and as they struggle with

[1] William Watson.

their limitations and their chains, the great Deliverer comes, as He came that night to the little group shocked with the sorrow of His departure, and says to us, "I am the life."

¶ The man who is sailing under trustworthy captainship, and in company with genial friends, out of one zone into another, is scarcely conscious of the lines of demarcation over which the ship glides. Throughout the months of summer, darkness is unknown in the latitudes of the far north. The rising and the setting suns blend their light without the handbreadth of a shadow between.[1]

I lift mine eyes to see: earth vanisheth.
I lift up wistful eyes and bend my knee:
Trembling, bowed down, and face to face with Death,
I lift mine eyes to see.

Lo what I see is Death that shadows me:
Yet whilst I, seeing, draw a shuddering breath,
Death like a mist grows rare perceptibly.

Beyond the darkness light, beyond the scathe
Healing, beyond the Cross a palm-branch tree,
Beyond Death Life, on evidence of faith;
I lift mine eyes to see.[2]

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Imperfect Angel*, 255.
[2] C. G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 193.

The Giving of the Comforter.

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THE GIVING OF THE COMFORTER.

If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you.—John xiv. 15–17.

1. THERE is no such profoundly moving scene in all history as this last evening of our Lord before His death. We need not, and we may not, add one touch to the simple narrative of St. John; in his words the scene stands out in its absolute simplicity. As we read these last chapters of his Gospel we seem to be admitted to the very scene itself; to the sorrow, the bewilderment, the helplessness of the Twelve; to the far-reaching Divine mind and infinite loveliness of the Master.

We stand before some great picture and strive to read the mind of the artist, and one of us will see one subtle meaning and another another; or we contemplate the many-sided aspect of nature, and each of us reads into it some reflex of his own mind; and so it is with a great historic scene like this; according to our spirituality, to our insight, and devotion, and purity, and truth, will be the lessons we shall draw from it. This Scripture is of no private interpretation; it is wider and larger than any of our little formulas in which we may try to bind it. It is the task of a life to interpret all that is involved in this farewell address of Christ.

2. The disciples were in something like a panic over the announcement made to them by Christ that He was going away. At the bare word the world seemed to become a blank for these men. All the sunshine of life seemed to suffer immediate and total eclipse. For Jesus was everything to them. In a sense they had nothing in the world but Jesus. He was more than their best friend. He was their all in all. For Him they had

sacrificed fathers and mothers and home and friends and business and every earthly prospect. And now He was going! In response to His call they had embarked upon a new life. They had taken up their cross and followed Him. It was not an easy life; it was a hard life, a toilsome life, a sacrificial life. Already they had been called upon to suffer trial and persecution for His Name's sake. But with Jesus at their side they had never faltered. With His presence to cheer and strengthen them, they had bravely held on their way. But now He was going. The whole edifice of their life seemed to fall crashing in ruins about their ears. And then to these panic-stricken disciples Jesus explained what His departure meant. He had been as God to them. In Him God had touched the very springs of their life and entered into their souls. His going did not mean that God would forsake them. If He went, they would not be left desolate; God would send them another Advocate, another Helper, who would be to them all that Jesus Himself had been and more; who would bring them just the same sense of God's nearness and presence; who would inspire and help them just as effectively as Jesus Himself had done.

3. The subject, then, is the giving of the Comforter, and the passage divides itself easily into two parts:—

I. On what Conditions the Comforter is given.

II. For what Purposes the Comforter is given.

I.

On what Conditions the Comforter is given.

There are two conditions expressly named that have to be fulfilled before the Comforter comes. The first condition is that *the disciples must be obedient.* "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments, and . . ." The other is that *Jesus prays the Father* to give them the Comforter: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you." From these two conditions there flow two results: first, that the Comforter is a gift—"he will *give* you another Comforter"; and second, that He is given to the disciples who are obedient, and not to the disobedient "world."

i. Obedience.

"If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments."

1. Before the promises there is a proviso. It is premised that there is a state of heart and a character of life to which they belong. As the works and the gifts of power were made dependent on faith and prayer, so the experiences now foretold presuppose the life of love and duty. This appropriation is laid down to begin with, and is insisted on more largely as the promises unfold.

¶ The preferable reading, "If ye love me, *ye will keep* my commandments," gives the future instead of the imperative of the Authorized Version, rather describing a process than imposing a condition; but the meaning is the same—namely, that these are promises which belong only to him who loves and obeys.[1]

2. In "If ye love me" we hear a confiding rather than a doubtful tone. The love is supposed, as elsewhere it is expressly recognized. But it proves true love only in one way, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments"; and again, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." There is a voice of Divine authority in the phrase, "my commandments." They claim obedience, but the obedience of love; and love will render it. Love is the spring of action, and is in its nature free; but it is not left to its own impulses; it acknowledges authority; it is placed under rule, and includes the element of obligation.

¶ The connexion between love and commandment dwelt on the mind of St. John, and reappears more than once in his Epistle. It is not according to the tendencies of human nature, as we all know, and as St. Paul has set forth in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans in recording his experience of the law and its effects. It is, in fact, distinctive of *Christian* duty and of the morality of the *Gospel*. In Christ the claims of authority and the affections of the heart agree in one. Here, as ever, the teaching of Jesus fixes our minds on the practical side of religion—on doing what we know, on living and walking by His words.[2]

[1] T. D. Bernard, *The Central Teaching of Jesus Christ*, 159.
[2] *Ibid.*

3. Obedience is the one test of sincerity, the one mode of retaining the warmth of love. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." The Bible says very little of what we call religion; but very much of God, and of Christ, and of love. Christ does not say, "If ye love me, then ye will meet often to worship me"; He does say, "ye will keep my commandments"; and the chief and summary of all the commandments are the love of God and the love of our neighbour. The true worship of God is obedience and love. It is an idolatrous notion that God is pleased with mere worship. Just as thousands of burnt-offerings and ten thousands of rivers of oil availed nothing without the love and obedience of the worshipper, so not all our gifts or our services are precious to Him except in so far as they are the offering of our love and obedience, and as they help us in our daily life.

¶ God cannot, will not, does not, bless those who are living in disobedience. But only set out in the path of obedience, and at once, before one stone is laid upon another, God is eager, as it were, to pour out His blessing. "From this day will I bless you."[1]

4. But do we not need the Spirit to make us obedient; do we not long for the Spirit's power, just because we mourn so much the disobedience there still is, and desire to be otherwise? And yet Christ claims obedience as the condition of the Father's giving and our receiving the Spirit. The answer is that Christ Jesus had come to prepare the way for the Spirit's coming. Or rather, His outward coming in the flesh was the preparation for His inward coming in the Spirit to fulfil the promise of a Divine indwelling. The outward coming appealed to the soul, with its mind and feeling, and affected these. It was only as Christ in His outward coming was accepted, as He was loved and obeyed, that the inward and more intimate revelation would be given. Personal attachment to Jesus, the personal acceptance of Him as Lord and Master to love and obey, was the disciples' preparation for the baptism of the Spirit.

¶ It is as we prove our love to Jesus in a tender listening to the voice of conscience, and a faithful effort to keep His commands, that the heart will be prepared for the fulness of the Spirit. Our attainments may fall short of our aims, we may have to mourn

[1] *Hudson Taylor's Sayings*, 43.

that what we would we do not—if the Master sees the whole-hearted surrender to His will, and the faithful obedience to what we already have of the leadings of His Spirit, we may be sure that the full gift will not be withheld.[1]

ii. Prayer.

"And I will pray the Father."

1. There are two telephones across the abyss that separates the ascended Christ from us. One of them is contained in His words, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it"; the other is contained in these words, "If ye keep my commandments, I will ask." Love on this side of the great cleft sets love on the other side of it in motion in a twofold fashion. If we ask, He does; if we do, He asks. His action is the answer to our prayers and His prayers are the answer to our obedient action.

2. "I will ask" seems a strange drop from the lofty claims with which we have become familiar in the earlier verses of this chapter. "Believe in God, believe also in me"; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it"; "Keep my commandments." All these distinctly express, or necessarily imply, Divine nature, prerogatives, and authority. But here the voice that spake the perfect revelation of God, and gave utterance authoritatively to the perfect law of life, softens and lowers its tones in petition; and Jesus Christ joins the ranks of the suppliants. Now common sense tells us that apparently diverse views lying so close together in one continuous stream of speech cannot have seemed to the utterer of them to be contradictory; and there is no explanation which does justice to these two sides of Christ's consciousness—the one all Divine and authoritative and lofty, and the other all lowly and identifying Himself with petitioners and suppliants everywhere—except the belief that He is "God manifest in the flesh." The bare humanistic view which emphasizes such utterances as these does not know what to do with the other ones, and cannot manage to unite these two images into a stereoscopic solid. That is reserved for the faith which believes in the Manhood and in the Deity of our Lord and Saviour.

[1] A. Murray, *The Spirit of Christ*, 72.

¶ In all utterances of Jesus Christ which express the lowest humiliation and completest identification of Himself with humanity, there is ever present some touch of obscured glory, some all but suppressed flash of brightness which will not be wholly concealed. Note two things in this great utterance; one, Christ's quiet assumption that all through the ages, and to-day, nineteen centuries after He died, He knows, at the moment of their being done, His servants' deeds. "Keep my commandments, and, knowing that you keep them, I will then and there pray for you." He claims in the lowly words an altogether supernatural, abnormal, Divine cognizance of all the acts of men down the ages and across the gulf between earth and heaven.[1]

3. Christ's prayer is the expression of the eternal Will respecting those for whom He prays. There is no thought of the Son for man that is not the thought of the Father. There is no dissonance of feeling, no discordance of desire, no conflict of will. The promise that Christ will pray is the assurance that the thing He asks for will be given. It is the utterance of that which is in the heart of God.

¶ We are not to think of Christ's advocacy in heaven as if it were of the nature of supplication on our behalf. It is much more than that, although it is to be feared that the modern ideas which have usurped the ground which the word "intercession" covers have nearly evacuated the word of its fuller and more glorious signification. The word used by Christ in this very verse implies that His Personal mediation is an "appeal" of a higher kind than we understand by prayer. So, again, in John xvii. 9, 15, 20. And notice that this word is used by Him before His glorification. He never uses of Himself the word "ask" which He so often uses when He bids us pray. We have to ask in His Name, and the ground of our reliance when we so pray is His universal intervention for His Church, the result of His sacrificial "appeal." He intervenes in heaven (Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25), personally, presenting His merits as our High Priest on behalf of all His members who come unto God through Him. The other Paraclete intervenes on earth (Rom. viii. 27), not by intermediate advocacy, but by the elevating power of Divine inspiration, lifting us up to speak with God our Father in the fulness of Christ's merits, by the living fellowship wherein He unites us with Him.[2]

4. As our Saviour prayed to the Father for them, so now they

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, ii. (pt. i.) 359.

would pray for themselves by the grace of the Advocate. Much of our Saviour's work among men was teaching them to help themselves. He taught them to pray, not simply by putting a form of words into their mouths, but by leading them into the presence of the Father, by instructing and encouraging them to maintain a humble boldness in that presence, and by assuring them that their prayers offered in His name would have as much power as His own prayers offered by Himself.

The disciples seem to have made the mistake of thinking that they must always have His intercession to lean upon. They were thankful for it, but it was becoming a hindrance to their own devotions; as all help becomes a hindrance the moment it discourages personal effort instead of drawing it forth. The mother's finger is useful to the little child learning to walk, as long as it is needed to impart courage and give steadiness; but as soon as it tempts to idleness and thoughtlessness, it must be withdrawn. And so any religious help is good as long as our ignorance, or coldness, or want of faith requires a kind of external support, but that should only be preparatory to our walking, working, and praying by virtue of an inner impulse. Our Lord was the advocate outside His disciples, praying for them sometimes while they slept, reading their wants and interpreting them to God, doing for them what they must do for themselves if they are to become strong men. And the time for the withdrawal of His aid was at hand; and instead of it was to be substituted the advocacy of the Holy Ghost in their hearts; through His grace they would be enabled to plead for themselves as earnestly and successfully as Christ had done for them; which would be a clear spiritual gain. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."

iii. The Gift.

"He will give."

1. The Father sent His Son into the world. He does not send His Spirit into the world, but He *gives* Him to the faithful.

The word "giving" is larger than the word "sending." Although the latter is also used respecting the Holy Ghost whom the Father gives, yet the more adequate word is that which Jesus uses here. The mission would not imply any covenanted circle of recipients. A mission may be towards enemies. When we were enemies God sent His Son, that we might be reconciled by His death (Rom. v. 10). The Son was not given to all mankind. He was "sent" to them. God sent His Son (John viii. 16). God "commissioned" Him (1 John iv. 10). God sent His Son into the world. He gave Him not *to* the world, but *for* the world as a sacrifice (John iii. 16). The Spirit is "given" to the faithful, to dwell in them. A gift implies a permanent bestowal. The Presence of the Holy Ghost with the Church is a permanent bestowal. He is not to be withdrawn. This is "the gift of God," respecting which our Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria. Similarly our Lord says of His flesh, "The bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John vi. 51). This promised gift of Christ's flesh is by the power of His Spirit. So the gift of the Spirit of life is prior and preparatory to the gift of the food of life.

2. The Spirit is the gift of the Father, because the Father is the Fountain of all Godhead. The Manhood of Christ is represented by our Lord as setting before the Father the necessities of the case, the human needs of His brethren, those whom the Father has given to Him. The Father, as the Source of all Divine life, gives the Spirit; not a created agency, but an essential communication of the indivisible Godhead which is in the Father. The gift of God must be worthy of God, and therefore cannot be less than God.

3. This gift had never yet been given. The Holy Ghost had indeed been sent from God to the prophets by whom He spoke, but He had not been given to the prophets. He was not given to any one previously; much less could there be any "ministration of the Spirit" by human agency in a covenanted society such as it would be when Christ was glorified as the Head of the Body, the Church. The Father's gift would be a continuous presence pledged to that society which Christ had called out of the world.

Twice have I erred: a distant God
  Was what I could not bear;
Sorrows and cares were at my side;
  I longed to have Him there.

But God is never so far off
  As even to be near;
He is within: our spirit is
  The home He holds most dear.[1]

iv. The World.

"Whom the world cannot receive."

1. The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it lives content with the superficial knowledge of things around. It does not contemplate God so as to gain a loving familiarity with Divine truth. Instead of looking at the phenomenal from the standpoint of Divine faith, so as to see in outward things the operation of Divine relationships, it is content with registering them as they appear to the outward senses. The contemplation of God's moral government will go a long way towards solving many of the difficulties which we find in creation. If we refuse to accept that amount of Divine truth which has come down to us by the primitive traditions of our race, and has been developed by the teaching of prophets and the contemplations of the faithful in subsequent ages, we are not in a position to receive the Spirit of truth. Nature becomes to us what a geometrical figure would be to those who disregarded the elementary problems of geometry necessary for its elucidation.

¶ If the movements of a planet can prove the existence of another planet by whose proximity it is affected, how much more ought the varied operations of nature to lead a thoughtful mind, which has a love of truth, to recognize the creative mind by which all the functions of the universe are regulated and maintained in unity! If, on the contrary, the interest which superficial occurrences excite becomes so absorbing as to make men give up the deeper devotional acknowledgment of that which is hidden, then they are rejecting the eternal truth, however assiduously they may seek to record and illustrate those data which constitute our science—so shallow after all, although to us

[1] F. W. Faber.

so seemingly profound. They unfit themselves for the reception of the Eternal Spirit of truth.[1]

2. The Lord does not say that the world cannot receive many good things, for it does receive them; nor does He say that it cannot appreciate them, for it is alive to their excellence. Many of the world's people see and appreciate the beautiful; and beauty is a good, whether in nature, art, or literature. They see the value of honour and probity in all the affairs of the present life, and they denounce falsehood and overreaching; but they do not know the Holy Spirit. They have no consciousness of His working, for they are unyielding. There may be movements of the Spirit of truth towards something better in not a few of their minds, but they are resisted; the Spirit is not discerned or recognized; and thus neglected and insulted He withdraws.

¶ I once stood far up on the *Becca di Nona* in Piedmont, the valley in which the old Roman city of Aosta lies being below, and on the other side, not far off, two great peaks of the mountains, part of the Alpine range. There were two clouds, about equal in size, floating and abiding above the two peaks, whose course I watched. The one cloud kept in a compact mass together, seemingly repelled by the hardness and non-receptivity of the granite peak beneath it. The other, after a little while, apparently drawn and attracted by its peak beneath, gradually opened out its fleecy beauties and gracefully descended, bathing the happy mountain peak in its exquisite softness and beauty. So, thought I, is it with the influences of the blessed Spirit. They are near us, ready to descend upon us in their sweetest blessings; but the world is as the granite peak which did not attract the cloud, while the humble, God-fearing soul does not repel, and the Divine Spirit descends and fills it with His grace.[2]

3. The two reasons which our Lord gives for the fact that the world does not receive the Spirit are (1) that the world beholds Him not, and (2) that it knows Him not.

(1) "It beholdeth him not."—This is the real secret of men's laughter at the idea of the existence of the Holy Ghost—they see Him not. Tell the worldling, "I have the Holy Ghost within me." He says, "I cannot see it." He wants it to be something tangible: a thing he can recognize with his senses.

[1] R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, ii. (pt. i.) 368.
[2] H. Wilkes, *The Bright and Morning Star*, 125.

¶ Have you ever heard the argument used by a good old Christian against an infidel doctor? The doctor said there was no soul, and he asked, "Did you ever see a soul?" "No," said the Christian. "Did you ever hear a soul?" "No." "Did you ever smell a soul?" "No." "Did you ever taste a soul?" "No." "Did you ever feel a soul?" "Yes," said the man—"I feel I have one within me." "Well," said the doctor, "there are four senses against one: you have only one on your side." "Very well," said the Christian, "Did you ever see a pain?" "No." "Did you ever hear a pain?" "No." "Did you ever smell a pain?" "No." "Did you ever taste a pain?" "No." "Did you ever feel a pain?" "Yes." "And that is quite enough, I suppose, to prove there is a pain?" "Yes." So the worldling says there is no Holy Ghost because he cannot see Him. Well, but we feel Him. You say that is fanaticism, and that we never felt Him. Suppose you tell me that honey is bitter, I reply, "No, I am sure you cannot have tasted it; taste it, and try." So with the Holy Ghost; if you did but feel His influence, you would no longer say there is no Holy Spirit, because you cannot see Him. Are there not many things, even in nature, which we cannot see? Did you ever see the wind? No; but you know there is wind, when you behold the hurricane tossing the waves about and rending down the habitations of men; or when in the soft evening zephyr it kisses the flowers, and makes dewdrops hang in pearly coronets around the rose. Did you ever see electricity? No; but you know there is such a thing, for it travels along the wires for thousands of miles, and carries our messages. So you must believe there is a Holy Ghost working in us, both to will and to do, even though He is beyond our senses.[1]

(2) The other reason why worldly men do not receive the Holy Spirit is because they do not know Him. If they knew Him by heart-felt experience, and if they recognized His agency in the soul; if they had ever been touched by Him; if they had been made to tremble under a sense of sin; if they had had their hearts melted; they would never have doubted the existence of the Holy Ghost.

¶ No explanation is of any value in matters which do not grow out of experience. Until a deaf man hears music, it is wasted breath to describe it, and there is no proof of colour to the blind. When Jesus spoke to the disciples the words recorded in the fourteenth chapter of John, He offered them truth for

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

experience without explanation. He promised them manifestation of Himself. He knew that the one who should enter into this experience would never be perplexed by Divine reticence in explanation, or by the imperfection of human philosophy.[1]

II.

For what Purposes the Comforter is given.

The first purpose is to comfort. But as He is spoken of as the Spirit of truth, a special form of the comfort is the leading of the disciples into the truth. A third purpose is that He may abide for ever.

i. The Comforter.

The true Christian has three Comforters, and each of them is Divine. God the Father is styled by St. Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, "the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation." God the Son, in the words of the text, speaks of Himself as one Comforter; and St. Paul tells us that "our consolation" or comfort "aboundeth by Christ." God the Holy Ghost is specifically named by Jesus Christ in several instances as "the Comforter," and His peculiar office as such is fully unfolded in the last discourse of our Lord to His disciples before His crucifixion. Thus each person of the ever-blessed Trinity is a Comforter, Divine in character, infinite in fulness, eternal in duration. There is, then, no true comfort or consolation that the heart can desire which may not be found in God the Father as the God of all comfort; in God the Son as the Paraclete with the Father; and in God the Holy Ghost as "the Comforter" who proceedeth from the Father and the Son.

1. *The word "Comforter."*—The word translated "Comforter" is found only in the writings of St. John. You look in vain for it in all other portions of Scripture. We have it four times in the Gospel according to St. John, as coming from the lips of Jesus. We find it once in the First Epistle of St. John (ii. 1). In the Gospel, where the word is used by Christ and is applied to the

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 17.

third person of the Trinity, it is translated Comforter; in the Epistle, where it is applied to Jesus, it is translated Advocate. In both instances the word is the same; it is the Divine Paraclete.

¶ It was the custom in the ancient tribunals for the parties to appear in court attended by one or more of their most influential friends, who were called in Greek *paracletes*, in Latin *advocatus*. These paracletes, or advocates, gave their friends—not from fee or reward, but from love and interest—the advantage of their personal presence and the aid of their judicious counsel. They thus advised them what to do, what to say, spoke for them, acted on their behalf, made the cause of their friends their cause, stood by them and for them in the trials, difficulties, and dangers of their situation. In this sense our Lord is said by St. John to be our Paraclete—where he says, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"—One in heaven before God, who appears there on our behalf, patronizes our cause, urges our plea, ever living to "make intercession for us."

While on earth, our Lord had counselled, advised, spoken for, and on behalf of, His disciples. They had looked to Him for aid, succour, comfort, truth, grace; and thus, ever at their side, He had been to them a Paraclete, or Advocate. He had most thoroughly identified Himself with them, had taught them to pray, to preach, to live, to work miracles, and the mysteries of the Kingdom. But He was now to leave them. His bodily form was to be removed. Yet, with a sweetness of compassion peculiarly touching, He says, "I will not leave you comfortless," orphans, undefended, unadvocated, unsustained. "It is expedient for you that I go away: and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."[1]

¶ Many are the emergencies of human life, and many are the forms of help which they require, and all are included in this great comprehensive name. If we wish to distinguish, we may range them in two divisions, the advocacy of our cause before others, the support of companionship to ourselves. When we think of the one office, we speak of an advocate; when of the other, of a comforter. But the same person will fulfil either office as need requires; and both are included in the word "Paraclete." Therefore the choice of the English equivalent in any particular case may be dictated by the nature of the occasion and the general feeling of the situation. If so, the Revisers have

[1] W. B. Stevens.

done well in retaining the old rendering "the Comforter" in the four passages in which "Paraclete" here occurs, as they were plainly right in retaining that of "Advocate" in the only other passage where it is found (1 John ii. 1). The situation presented in the Gospel more naturally suggests the first rendering, while that contemplated in the Epistle certainly prescribes the second.[1]

2. "*Another Comforter.*"—The word "another" signifies that Jesus Himself was an advocate, helper, paraclete, comforter. But it does not mean that He was now to be superseded, or that, going out of sight, He was also to be out of mind. Scarred with wounds and enthroned as the Head of the Church, He was to be more in His people's minds and hearts, better represented in their lives, than hitherto. For—let us be clear about this—Jesus, and He alone, is our life; it was He and He alone who bore our stripes and carried our death down into His grave, transfiguring our departure, with whatever distress and humiliation may attend it, into a promotion and home-going. "He that hath the Son hath life." If we can say with a true and thankful heart, "I am Thine own, O Christ"; "My beloved is mine, and I am his"; "To me to live is Christ,"—then we possess the everlasting Life, and will never see Death.

Although Jesus spoke of another Comforter, two facts are clear—the one, that He would continue, and more fully than ever, to be the life of the believing soul and the believing Church; and the other, that the Holy Spirit would be the vehicle of that life, uniting Christ and the soul, and so bringing it to pass that the Church should not so much mourn an absent Lord as rejoice in a present Spirit.

¶ God forbid that our thoughts should for one moment be turned away from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the Incarnate Head of His ransomed Church. It is as His executive that the Holy Spirit acts, and in Him there is nothing approaching to either abdication or desertion. There is no such thing as abdication; for we are told that God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." Nor is there desertion, for in the self-same chapter in which He gives the promise of another Paraclete He gives also the promise of His own presence in the words, "I will not leave

[1] T. D. Bernard.

you comfortless: I will come to you" (ver. 18); and in the assurance given to those that love Him, He says (ver. 23), "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It may be asked, How is such language consistent with those other words of His, in which He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you"? But the answer is simple. As the localized incarnate Son of man, He is gone away, and is now where Stephen saw Him, at the right hand of God; but as the eternal Person of the undivided Trinity, He is omnipresent and ever acting; nor is it within the capacity of finite beings like ourselves to put any limit on His Divine action.[1]

3. *How does the Comforter comfort?*—We know by the fruits of His comfort. To the disciples everything about the working of that Divine Comforter was wrapt in mystery except the fruits. How He made His temple in man, how He imparted His light and His truth to His creatures, how He strengthened the vacillating, and spoke without words to the inward ear, and raised the fallen, and won back the wanderer, none could trace, none could know. The wind bloweth where it listeth: the ways of the Spirit are unsearchable. It is vain to imagine how that Heavenly Person associates Himself with our spirit, becomes to us the source of light and strength, and of the desire of good, making His work our work too, overshadowing, protecting, guarding our souls, giving us thoughts above our own thoughts, surprising us into an earnestness so unlike our common selves. Why should we expect to be conscious of His Presence? Why should we expect, such as we are, to recognize and discern clearly what is of God? But the effects of His Presence were soon recognized in the world, and have never ceased to be recognized since. They were seen in those two contrasted lists in the Epistle to the Galatians, of the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit—of what the moral world had been and was, without Him, and of that new phenomenon and substantial fact of character which had shown itself beyond denial since He had come.

(1) Let us take the word "comfort" first in its modern sense, a sense covered by the Greek word, though not its chief meaning. Then we may say that He comforts us in our sorrow, providing consolation and affording relief.

[1] E. Hoare, *Great Principles of Divine Truth*, 234.

¶ When I think over the troubles of which I have heard even this week, I know that this is a world that needs comfort. One boy of brilliant promise lies struck down by sudden illness in a nursing-home; another man in the prime of life, doing a brilliant work, has a sickness on him to-day which I fear will never leave him, or, if it leaves him, will take away all power of work. There are two young women lately married; one is a widow after eight months, and the other after three. Another woman has her child born dead. And as these sorrows roll on me, at the centre of this great diocese—and I rejoice that people should pour their troubles on to me, inadequate as I feel myself to help them—I look up to heaven and I say, "If there were not a Comforter sent from heaven, where should we be?" And it was because our Saviour knew this that during that sad Holy Week, before He left, He made us this beautiful promise: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter besides Me, another Comforter who shall abide with you for ever; there shall be with you the Holy Ghost, the Comforter."[1]

(2) But the Spirit's function is not merely, or chiefly, to soothe sorrow and wipe away the tear. The word really does not suggest so much the quiet room as the battle-field. It is an energetic, forceful, militant word. It implies conflict and struggle, and for the conflict and the struggle the Spirit is a *fortifier*—He lifts men above fear; He reinforces them; He gives them triumph in battle—and that is exactly what the Spirit proved to be to these first disciples.

¶ We borrowed the term from a language, the makers of which set great store by these things. "Only be thou strong and very courageous," was the Lord's message to Joshua, the leader of the host of Israel. "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." *Confortare* is the rendering of the first phrase in the Vulgate Version of the Old Testament, and in the Septuagint it reads literally, "Be strong and *play the man.*" In Isaiah xli. 10 our noble Authorized Version gives us, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee." *Confortare* is once again the equivalent for this promise of strength. We observe, therefore, that the word which our fathers considered the best English equivalent of the Greek, "Paraclete," is one with a history, in which sweetness and strength are united. There is a

[1] Bishop A. F. W. Ingram, *A Mission of the Spirit*, 192.

sympathy which enervates and a sympathy which braces, a love which weakens and a love which inspires. In our Lord's promise of the Comforter it is Divine sympathy and love of the latter kind that are suggested.

¶ Did not the Apostle pray on behalf of his Ephesian friends that they might be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man? Did not our Lord give His disciples to expect that they should "be endued with power from on high"? Did He not associate this expectation with the promise of the Spirit? I think we may feel the idea of this strengthening to be an ingredient in the meaning of the word comfort as employed in the New Testament; as, for instance, when we are told that the Church in Judæa, Galilee, Samaria, had rest, and, "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the *comfort of the Holy Ghost*, was multiplied." And I should say this element of strengthening entered more or less into the meaning intended to be conveyed by the word comfort or Comforter in various places in our Prayer-Book: in the prayer at Confirmation, "Strengthen them . . . with the Holy Ghost the Comforter," and in the invitation, "Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort." In truest comfort, in God-given comfort—and of this the New Testament speaks—there is *power*; it may prove to be an essential element or condition of real power.[1]

¶ Just over a century ago Robert Morrison set sail for China; it seemed a quixotic business. "Do you think," said the captain of the ship in which he sailed, "that you are going to convert China?" "No," replied Morrison, "but I believe that God will."[2]

ii. The Spirit of Truth.

1. Three times in these verses is the Spirit called the Spirit of truth. And, in the original, each time the title occurs, it is the Spirit of *the* truth. This must be taken to mean the truth which is in Jesus, the truth which is Christ Himself, which was incarnate in Him. For shortly before giving forth this promise of the Spirit He had proclaimed Himself to be "the way, and the truth, and the life." "I am . . . the truth:" "the Spirit is the truth." "He shall [both] teach you all things, *and* [more especially] bring to your remembrance *all that I said* unto you." "He shall bear witness *of me*." "He shall guide you into

[1] J. W. Bishop, *The Christian Year and the Christian Life*, 247.
[2] J. D. Jones, *Things Most Surely Believed*, 141.

all *the* truth." "He shall glorify me: for he shall take *of mine*, and shall declare it unto you." The Spirit for whose coming, for whose replenishing or baptism, foretold by the Baptist, the disciples would have still a little while to wait, would make clear to them something of the meaning of Jesus' earthly life, and of His teaching concerning God and man and duty, so that they might make it clear to others.

He is the "Spirit of truth," not as if He brought new truth. To suppose that He does so, opens the door to all manner of fanaticism; but the truth, the revelation of which is all summed and finished in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, is the weapon by which the Divine Spirit works all His conquests, the staff on which He makes us lean and be strong. He is the Spirit by whom the truth passes into our personal possession, by no mere imperfect form of outward teaching, which is always confused and insufficient, but by the inward teaching that deals with our hearts and our spirits.

¶ The method used by the Spirit of truth is not driving or forcing, but "leading," "guiding," by winning ways and by persistently pointing to the truth and commendingly interpreting it. When we gaze upon a picture we may for ourselves see much that is beautiful and attractive in its mode of exhibiting colour, form, and expression. But to understand the inner meaning of the picture and appreciate its main purpose and idea, we may need some skilled interpreter to open our eyes to its most vital and inherent excellencies. The Holy Spirit is such a guide to the Saviour and such an interpreter and revealer of the true grace and glory of Jesus Christ in His purpose and mission into this world.[1]

2. Christ is the Truth. The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, is the Spirit of truth. He is the Spirit of truth in two ways. He is communicated from Jesus, who is the Truth, and He is the living power of the Triune Energy, by which Jesus Himself is the Truth. In Him the Son of God is begotten eternally as the Image of the Father. By Him the Son of God was conceived in the womb according to the fulness of the Divine purpose. The truth of Christ's Godhead in the unity of the Holy Ghost necessitated the truth of His Manhood assumed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

[1] A. H. Drysdale, *Christ Invisible our Gain*, 186.

3. The Spirit of truth, communicated to the Church, is the living Presence, in wisdom, power, and love, of that Divine energy which formed the worlds. They were formed for the habitation of God purposing to become incarnate. The Spirit of the Incarnate God fits the Church as the Body of Christ, to exercise dominion over all the creation which He has framed with a fitness for this final occupation. There is nothing superfluous, so as to be beyond the eventual purposes of God for His Church. There is nothing wanting, so that the Church of God, the Body of Christ, may feel within herself a Divine capacity for which the created universe gave no practical scope.

¶ The truth of the creature is not separable from the truth of the Creator. Creation is true to itself, while it is true to the mind of the Creator. The first laws of creation are the impress of the Eternal Mind. If they were not so, they would be purely accidental and mutable. Doubtless there are harmonies in creation far deeper and grander than we can trace out. Harmonies of sight and sound, of number and weight, of mechanical power and chemical combination, of microscopic delicacy and astronomical magnificence, of universal distribution and temporal sequence, may be the objects of our guess-work at present, but at the best we can know them now only as one standing on the shore can know the waves whose ripple washes over the sand, all ignorant of the vast ocean far away. But all the universe is true, because the worlds of matter and spirit are the projection of the infinite intelligence of Him who is in His own true essence the law of beauty and truth to which all His creatures must be conformed.[1]

4. How does the Spirit of truth operate?

(1) *He enlightens our mind that we may know Christ Jesus.*—He opens the eyes to the true meaning and aims of Christ's words and work by furnishing insight into them, and enabling us to realize not only their true inwardness, but their vital importance —giving an attractiveness to them and a fascinating interest in them to our yearning and wondering heart and mind.

We can see the process of enlightenment going on in the New Testament. Take the one matter of the universality of the Kingdom. When Christ left the disciples, they were as narrow in their notions as any Jews in the land; they saw no place for

[1] R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, ii. (pt. i.) 364.

Gentiles in the Kingdom: but see how gradually the Spirit led them to an understanding of Christ's purpose. First of all, the Samaritans receive the word. Then, at the impulse of the Spirit, Philip preaches to the Ethiopian eunuch and baptizes him. Then, at the direct and imperious bidding of the Spirit, Peter goes to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and baptizes him. And then, finally, the Spirit thrusts forth Barnabas and Saul into the work of evangelizing the world, and so the truth is gradually brought home to the disciples and Apostles that they shall come from the North and the South and the East and the West, and sit down in the Kingdom of God.

When Jesus says of this Spirit that "he shall guide you into all truth," He does not mean that the Holy Ghost will guide us into natural truth, or scientific truth, or metaphysical truth; but into those great central truths—the atoning death, the justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ; those poles on which turn as on an axle the whole round scheme of redemption and grace. As it was by this Spirit of truth that the prophecies concerning Christ were uttered which fill the Old Testament; as it was by the Spirit of truth that Jesus was conceived by the Virgin Mary; as it was by this Spirit of truth that He was anointed for His ministry after His baptism: so is it declared that His office is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men.

Nor is it a new revelation which the Spirit gives, but rather a more perfect understanding of that which has already been given in Christ. Here, then, is the test by which to try all that claims the authority of spiritual truth. Does it "glorify" Christ? Does it lead us into a fuller knowledge of Him "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden"? "Whosoever goeth onward," says St. John, in a remarkable passage, for which English readers are indebted to the Revised Version, "and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God." In other words, no true progress is possible except as we abide in Christ.

¶ I sometimes sit at my study window on a bright morning, and combine with my work the pleasure of looking at my share of God's beautiful world. It is a wonderful blend of landscape and marine, colour and form: trees and flowers in the foreground, dark roofs and tiled chimneys beyond, and behind all the grey and azure of the mighty sea. Not simply once, but many times, do

I lift my eyes to it, yet the picture is always the same. Floating clouds overhead may modify the light and shadow, but they do not change the permanent features in the least. And yet I know the picture is not out there: it is within me; it is not the eye but the mind that sees. The effect of the landscape is being impressed upon my consciousness, by the light of day—itself invisible. And every ray of light contains the perfect picture. I may look up a thousand times—it will always be there, while the light can fall upon the eye. And you may come with me and view the same picture. If you have eyes to see you shall have the perfect picture too. And a million persons may, if they choose, stand and gaze. The whole scene is theirs, as much as yours or mine. There is but one scene and one sun, but every ray of the energies of the latter reveals the whole of the former to every eye that is turned upon it. So it is with the work of the Divine Spirit, the other Paraclete. He reveals the Christ to those who seek Him, writes His name, and forms His likeness within the human soul. The living Christ, the indwelling Christ, becomes a rich personal spiritual experience in the power of the Holy Ghost.[1]

(2) *He encourages us to appropriate Christ.*—We feel entitled, without being chargeable with any vain confidence, to appropriate and apply to ourselves such words of personal conviction as, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd," "Thou knowest that *I* love *thee*," or, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." The very sting of death is extracted, and its terrors no longer keep the soul in thrall. So the dying saint, falling back at last as at first into the arms of a glorified Redeemer, breathes out his soul in fidelity, meekness, and hope, saying in fearless triumph, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

¶ The immortal Bengel died in 1752. One of his friends was travelling, and spent all night at Bengel's house. The great commentator was very busy with his Bible, and worked till nearly midnight. But the friend still waited. He knew the rich Christian character of the scholar, and wished to hear his evening prayer. At length the books were put on one side; Bengel arose, and knelt down beside his chair. He had been studying the words of Christ, and he knew that the blessed Master was near him all the time. So now there was no lengthened agony of supplication. Sweetly and simply the words of the scholar rose to heaven,

[1] R. J. Campbell.

"Lord Jesus, things are just the same between us," and then he laid himself down to rest. Perfect peace! perfect confidence! For he had appropriated Christ as his personal Saviour, and he knew Christ was *his*.[1]

(3) *He enables us to overcome sin and grow in true holiness.*—Our Lord prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Men of science have at length discovered what is the character of the world so far as it consists of animated things. "It is a struggle for existence;" it is "the survival of the fittest." So it is with the Christian life. The old man conquered, but not thoroughly subdued, contends with the new life which has been superinduced. It is a contest between the lower principles of man's nature and the higher, quickened and sanctified by the Spirit of God. It is a struggle between the animal man and the spiritual man; between pleasure and duty; between selfishness and benevolence; between appetite and conscience; between lust and reason; between love of ease and zeal for good; between cowardice and courage; between deceit and candour; between selfishness and love; between the fear of man and the fear of God; between earth and heaven. But they that be with us are far stronger than they that can be against us. The believer is not perfect in this world, but he is going on towards perfection in obedience to the command, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

¶ The connexion between justification and sanctification is not merely human gratitude for Divine grace as the motive of a new life; it is not only a conscious personal communion with a Divine Saviour and Lord, a communion that must be potent in conforming man to His moral perfection; but it is a habitation and operation in man of God by His Spirit, the very life of God become the life of man.[2]

(4) *He gives strength for witness and for service.*—The Holy Spirit who comes to give fulness to the work of Jesus must communicate new power proportionate to the new revelation. The new kingdom is to be marked by profounder spiritual life,

[1] J. A. Clapperton, *Culture of the Christian Heart*, 36.
[2] A. E. Garvie, *Studies of Paul and his Gospel*, 190.

by a clearer vision of eternal things, by a more vivid consciousness of sin, by mightier energies of holiness, by a diviner dynamic of spiritual love. In the might of inward spiritual force men and women are to occupy the heavenly places with Christ. To this end they must be endued with new power, with a vaster momentum of spiritual energy.

There need be no hesitation in affirming that the communication of inward spiritual power is the fundamental office of the Holy Spirit of the New Covenant. It is through this new influx of spiritual power that the new illumination is given. "The spiritual man judgeth all things, but he himself is judged of no man." At Pentecost and throughout the records of the Apostolic Church, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is fundamentally the giving of holy power. The keynote of the Spirit's presence is given by our Saviour in such words as these: "Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." This is the new spiritual power demanded by the new revelation. For, in view of the reception of this power, the Lord continued: "And ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

¶ "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming on you, *and* ye shall be witnesses unto me." The copula links together the power and the witness-bearing. Few facts of history are more convincing, as to the need of the Holy Ghost's power for Christian service, than that these first disciples, who had lived in our Lord's immediate society for three years and more, were yet not equipped by that long intimacy of fellowship and observation for the great task which He intended them to carry out. No. They had to tarry in the city of Jerusalem till they had been "endued with power from on high"; until they had received Him who was designated by the great title: "the promise of the Father." From this we may learn that a distinct gift, other than personal knowledge of Christ, and experience of His wonderful ways, confidence in His grace and power, remembrance of His words and works, and much besides, which these men possessed, is needed if we are to bear an effective witness for our loved and trusted Master.[1]

[1] R. C. Joynt, *Liturgy and Life*, 208.

iii. The Abiding.

1. The Comforter is to abide with us for ever. He is the instrument whereby the glory of Christ is communicated to His members, and so His Presence with the Church is coextensive in duration with the glory of Christ the Head. The ministry of humiliation was to cease. The ministry of righteousness was to be an eternal glory.

2. The Presence, the ever-continued assistance of the Holy Ghost, unearthly as it is, is yet a thing of the immediate present —of the present shaping and improvement of life, of present growth in depth and reality, and elevation of character. If ever we rise above what is of the earth, earthy; above what is of time, transitory; above what is of this world, fugitive, unsatisfying, corruptible—it is to Him that we shall owe it.

3. Two phrases, significant in variety, are used to describe the relation of the Spirit of truth to believers. First, that relation is spoken of as a Fellowship—"He abideth *with* you"; and next, it is represented as an Indwelling—"and shall be *in* you."

¶ Webster once said: "The greatest thought that ever entered my mind was that of my personal responsibility to a personal God." A great thought truly, and yet a greater is beneath it: my personal *relation* to a personal God.[1]

(1) *Fellowship.*—"He abideth with you." While Jesus was with His disciples below, the Holy Ghost dwelt with them in His person. They saw in Him the presence of the Divine Spirit. His mighty works, His wonderful words, His perfect holiness and charity and self-denial and truth, all these things, daily witnessed by them and profoundly reverenced, were results of the Spirit given to Him not by measure. Though He was very God, yet He acted below within the limits (as it were) of a perfectly inspired humanity. It was of the essence of His humiliation, that He lived and acted, spoke and wrought, during His earthly sojourn, as though He were only a Man full of the Holy Ghost. Thus, when He dwelt with them, the Holy Spirit dwelt with them; dwelt with them in a sense and with a fulness never realized in

[1] Bishop A. Pearson, *The Claims of the Faith*, 24.

the case of any others. And the Spirit who was in Jesus kept them also in the truth by virtue of a controlling influence put forth upon them from Him. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name."

This fellowship of the Spirit is ours also. The Comforter dwells with us in Church ordinances. Every time that we meet for worship there is a coexistence with us of the Holy Ghost. And He dwells with us in the haunts of common life. He dwells with us in Christian lives; in the daily sight and hearing of the conduct and language, of the acts and the words, of true Christian people

(2) *Indwelling.*—"And shall be in you." It would be esteemed a rare privilege to have a great and truly noble person dwell with us, a Paul, a Chrysostom, an Augustine; to have such an one as our perpetual monitor, and adviser, and exemplar; to have him show us how to act, how to speak, how to live; to have the benefit of his oversight, his wisdom, his favour. But then the person thus favoured might never fully copy the devotion of an Augustine, the eloquence of a Chrysostom, or the holiness of a Paul. How different, however, would the case be if there were a process by which *the spirit* of those great men, in its wholeness could be infused into the minds and hearts of others, so that instead of dwelling *with* an Augustine, Augustine should by his spirit dwell *in* them; instead of living *with* a Chrysostom, Chrysostom should live his life *in* them; instead of copying a Paul beside us, Paul should dwell *in* us as the abiding spirit. What a difference there would be! The indwelling spirit of an Augustine would make a second Augustine; the infused spirit of a Chrysostom would make another golden-mouthed preacher; and a Paul living in us would reproduce the spirit and the deeds of the great Apostle in our own life and work. The Comforter, as the Spirit of truth, not only dwells *with* us as a guest, but dwells *in* us as the inner controlling, shaping, enlightening, sanctifying Spirit, evolving out of Himself through the functions and faculties of our being, the fruits and graces of a holy life, and the beautiful character of a true Christian.

¶ The artist who paints a picture, or chisels a statue, impresses a certain amount of his own genius on flat canvas or cold marble.

It is not a beauty developed from within, working outward; but something put upon the passive canvas or marble, by an outside process that never goes beneath the surface, never imparts life within. But the artist power of the Holy Ghost is seen in that, taking up His abode in the heart, He renews and sanctifies that heart, and the outward life is but the development of the inward grace.[1]

To all the world mine eyes are blind;
Their drop serene is—night,
With stores of snow piled up the wind
An awful airy height.

And yet 'tis but a mote in the eye:
The simple faithful stars
Beyond are shining, careless high,
Nor heed our storms and jars.

And when o'er storm and jar I climb—
Beyond life's atmosphere,
I shall behold the lord of time
And space—of world and year.

Oh vain, far quest!—not thus my heart
Shall ever find its goal!
I turn me home—and there thou art,
My Father, in my soul![2]

¶ The Old Testament is full of the thought of the presence of God *with* His people. With very few exceptions—which are found chiefly in the Psalms—it is always "with." "My presence shall go *with* thee." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be *with* thee." This thought—and it is a very grand and comforting one—characterizes the whole of the ancient dispensation. Neither is it forgotten in the New. "Lo! I am *with* you alway, even unto the end of the world." But the new and determining feature of the Second Testament is the "*in*," the "*in you*." "I am *in* you." "Christ *in* you." "The Holy Ghost which is *in* you." "God is *in* you of a truth." "I will dwell *in* them, and walk *in* them."[3]

[1] W. B. Stevens. [2] George MacDonald. [3] James Vaughan.

Where He Delights to Dwell.

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Where He Delights to Dwell.

If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.—John xiv. 23.

1. The Judas, in reply to whose question our Lord spoke these words, held but a low place among the Apostles. In all the lists he is one of the last of the groups of four into which they are divided, and which were evidently arranged according to their spiritual nearness to the Master. His question is exactly one which a listener, with some dim, confused glimmer of Christ's meaning, might be expected to ask. He grasps at His last words about manifesting Himself to certain persons; he rightly feels that he and his brethren possess the qualification of love. He rightly understands that our Lord contemplates no public showing of Himself, and that disappoints him. It was only a day or two ago that Jesus seemed to them to have begun to do what they had always wanted Him to do—manifest Himself to the world. And now, as he thinks, something unknown to them must have happened in order to make Him change His course, and go back to the old plan of a secret communication. And so he says, "Lord! what has come to pass to induce you to abandon and falter upon the course on which we entered when you rode into Jerusalem with the shouting crowd?"

Notice how, in His reply, our Lord subtly and significantly alters the form of the statement which He has already made. He had formerly said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments," but now He casts it into a purely impersonal form, and says, "*If a man,*" anybody, not you only, but anybody—"if a man love me, he," anybody, "will keep my word." And why the change? Probably in order to strike full and square against that complacent assumption of Judas that it was "to us and not to the world" that the showing was to take place. Our Lord, by the

studiously impersonal form into which He casts the promise, proclaims its universality, and says to His ignorant questioner, "Do not suppose that you Apostles have the monopoly. You may not even have a share in My self-manifestation. Anybody may have it. And there is no 'world,' as you suppose, to which I do not show Myself. Anybody may have the vision if he observes the conditions."

2. "He will keep my *word*." That is more than a "commandment," is it not? It includes all His sayings, and it includes them all as in one vital unity and organic whole. We are not to go picking and choosing among them; they are one. And it includes this other thought, that every word of Christ, be it revelation of the deep things of God, or be it a promise of the great shower of blessings which, out of His full hand, He will drop upon our heads, enshrines within itself a commandment. He utters no revelations simply that we may know. He utters no comforting words simply that our sore hearts may be healed. In all His utterances there is a practical bearing; and every word of His teaching, every word of His sweet, whispered assurances of love and favour to the waiting heart, has in it the imperativeness of His manifested will, has a direct bearing upon duty. All His *words* are gathered into one *word*, and all the variety of His sayings is, in their unity, the law of our lives.

Here we have laid down for all time in precise language the condition of Divine manifestation, and the realization of Divine and quickening power as the reward of fulfilling that condition.

I.

The Condition is Loving Obedience.

He that longs for more satisfying knowledge of spiritual realities, he that thirsts for certainty and to see God as if face to face, must expect no sudden or magical revelation, but must be content with the true spiritual education which proceeds by loving and living. To the disciples the method might seem slow; to us also it often seems slow; but it is the method which nature

requires. Our knowledge of God and our belief that in Christ we have a hold of ultimate truth and are living among eternal verities, grow with our love and service for Christ. It may take us a lifetime—it will take us a lifetime—to learn to love Him as we ought; but others have learned and we also may learn, and there is no possible experience so precious to us.

¶ Obedience is the very pulse of spiritual life.[1]

¶ This universe is governed by laws. At the bottom of everything here there is a law. Things are in this way and not that; we call that a law or condition. All departments have their own laws. By submission to them, you make them your own. Obey the laws of the body: such laws as say, Be temperate and chaste; or of the mind: such laws as say, Fix the attention; strengthen by exercise; and then their prizes are yours—health, strength, pliability of muscle, tenaciousness of memory, nimbleness of imagination, etc. Obey the laws of your spiritual being, and it has its prizes too. For instance, the condition or law of a peaceful life is submission to the law of meekness: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The condition of the beatific vision is a pure heart and life: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." To the impure, God is simply invisible. The condition annexed to a sense of God's presence—in other words, that without which a sense of God's presence cannot be—is obedience to the laws of love: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." The condition of spiritual wisdom and certainty in truth is obedience to the will of God, surrender of private will.[2]

1. *The source of true obedience is love.*—Love and obedience have always been the condition on which the enjoyment of the Divine Presence depended. The sum of the Ten Commandments is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength and mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." And these words, of course, mean the same thing. They take us back, like the commandments, to His Father's authority, and they bring into force all those declarations of the Old Testament in which the keeping of the commandments is laid down as the condition of fellowship. "If ye walk in my statutes . . . I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Now it is love, and now it is obedience, that is named as the condition of union and

[1] Rainy, *Life*, i. 131. [2] F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, ii. 101.

communion with the Most High. The reason is at once apparent. True obedience can spring only from love. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Love is the hidden fountain; obedience is the visible stream. In its truest and highest forms Christianity is a religion of principles. It works from the centre outwards to the circumference. Its language is not "Do this," and "Forbear from that," but "Love, and thou fulfillest the law."

¶ That is exactly what distinguishes and lifts the morality of the Gospel above all other systems. The worst man in the world *knows* a great deal more of his duty than the best man *does*. It is not for want of knowledge that men go to the devil, but it is for want of power to live their knowledge. And what morality fails to do, with its clearest utterances of human duty, Christ comes and does. The one is like the useless proclamations posted up in some rebellious district, where there is no army to back them, and the king's authority from whom they come is flouted. The other gets itself obeyed. Such is the difference between the powerless morality of the world and the commandment of Jesus Christ. Here is the road plain and straight. What matters that, if there is no force to draw the cart along it? There might as well be no road at all. Here stand all your looms, polished and in perfect order, but there is no steam in the boilers; and so there is no motion, and nothing woven. What we want is not law but power. And what the Gospel gives us, and stands alone in giving us, is not merely the knowledge of the will of God and the clear revelation of what we ought to be, but it is the power to become it. Love does that, and love alone. That strong force brought into action in our hearts will drive out from thence all rivals, all false and low things. The true way to cleanse the Augean stables, as the old myth has it, was to turn the river into them. It would have been endless work to wheel out the filth in wheelbarrows loaded by spades: turn the stream in, and it will sweep away all the foulness. When the Ark comes into the Temple, Dagon lies, a mutilated stump, upon the threshold. When Christ comes into my heart, then all the obscene and twilight-loving shapes that lurked there, and defiled it, will vanish like ghosts at cock-crowing before His calm and pure presence. He, and He alone, entering my heart by the portals of my love, will coerce my evil and stimulate my good. And if I love Him, I shall keep His commandments.[1]

[1] A. Maclaren, *Holy of Holies*, 72.

¶ When the sun rises in the east, the sunflower opens towards its rays, and turns ever eagerly towards the sun, even until its setting in the west; and at night it closes and hides its colours and awaits the return of the sun. Even so will we open our hearts by obedience towards the illumination of the grace of God, and humbly and eagerly will we follow that grace so long as we feel the warmth of love. And when the light of grace ceases to awaken fresh emotions, and we feel the warmth of love but little, or feel it not at all, then it is night, when we shall close our heart to all that may tempt it; and so shall we shut up within ourselves the golden colour of love, awaiting a new dawn, with its new brightness and its fresh emotions; and thus shall we preserve innocence always in its pristine splendour.[1]

2. *The outcome of true love is obedience.*—There is no love worth calling love which does not obey. All the emotional and the mystic, and the so-called higher parts of Christian experience, have to be content to submit to this plain test—Do they help us to live as Christ would have us, and that because He would have us? Love to Him which does not keep His commandments is either spurious or dangerously feeble. The true sign of its presence in the heart and the noblest of its operations is to be found not in high-pitched expressions of fervid emotion, or even in the sacred joys of solitary communion, but in its making us, while in the rough struggle of daily life, and surrounded by trivial tasks, live near Him, and by Him, and for Him, and like Him.

So the test of love is obedience; and the more overmastering the love, the more will the obedience—not as reluctant, but as eager, not as a yoke or a burden, but as a passion and a life—dominate the whole self. It may be true that obedience which is not love is valueless. It is certainly true that love which does not express itself, perforce, in obedience, is not love. To the natural self the obedience of Christ seems burdensome. It is only experience of obedience that gives the lie to the instincts of the natural self. It is only experience that makes the religious man realize at last that Christ's yoke *is* easy, and His burden *is* light—not indeed because it dispenses with self-denial, but because self-denial itself, as the necessary expression of desire towards God, finds in its own very suffering a gladness which is greater and deeper than the pain.

[1] M. Maeterlinck, *Ruysbroeck and the Mystics*, 50.

¶ We must begin to love Christ before we can keep His word. Christ is the lawgiver of God's world, and before we can obey His laws we must be on terms of amity with Himself. This implies that we know Him to be at peace with us; for, as we are made, we cannot love where we dread. God's friendship must come before God's service. Now, the very opposite of this is frequently taught—that there is to be service before there can be friendship, and that peace can be purchased only by obedience. We need not so much consult the Bible to see the falsehood of this as look into our own hearts, where we may feel the impossibility of doing anything that will bear the look of service in a spiritual sense until the heart is in it.[1]

God's will is—the bud of the rose for your hair,
The ring for your hand and the pearl for your breast;
God's will is—the mirror that makes you look fair.
No wonder you whisper: "God's will is the best."

But what if God's will were the famine, the flood?—
And were God's will the coffin shut down in your face?—
And were God's will the worm in the fold of the bud,
Instead of the picture, the light, and the lace?

Were God's will the arrow that flieth by night,
Were God's will the pestilence walking by day,
The clod in the valley, the rock on the height—
I fancy "God's will" would be harder to say.

God's will is—your own will? What honour have you
For having your own will, awake or asleep?
Who praises the lily for keeping the dew,
When the dew is so sweet for the lily to keep?

God's will unto me is not music or wine,
With helpless reproaching, with desolate tears,
God's will I resist, for God's will is divine;
And I—shall be dust to the end of my years.

God's will is—not mine. Yet one night I shall lie
Very still at His feet, where the stars may not shine.
"Lo! I am well pleased," I shall hear from the sky;
Because—it is God's will I do, and not mine.[2]

[1] John Ker. [2] Sarah M. B. Piatt.

II.

The Reward is Divine Manifestation.

Revelation on the part of God presupposes a certain disposition on the part of man. Love to Christ—love to the Son of God, who has brought Himself within the range of human affection—brings to the believer the love of His Father. Then follows that inward, abiding, transforming fellowship in which the Christian sees God more clearly as he reflects His likeness a little less dimly. There is brought to pass that twofold fulness of the spiritual life which unites two worlds: Christ lives in the believer and the believer lives in Christ.

¶ God has not set up an arbitrary test of manifestation, He has taken the common course of our life, and given it applications to Himself. I might challenge the worshipper of Nature to say whether his god does not demand precisely the same condition of manifestation. The mountain is saying, If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him; the sun holds the same language, so does the sea, so does every leaf of the forest.[1]

¶ Christ will come unto thee, and shew thee His own consolation, if thou prepare for Him a worthy mansion within thee.

All His glory and beauty is from within, and there He delighteth Himself.

The inward man He often visiteth; and hath with him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceeding wonderful.

O faithful soul, make ready thy heart for this Bridegroom, that He may vouchsafe to come unto thee, and to dwell within thee.

For thus saith He, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."[2]

1. *The manifestation is in union with the Father.*—Jesus shows Himself to the obedient heart in indissoluble union with the Father. Look at the majesty, and, except upon one hypothesis, the insane presumption, of such words as these: "If a man love *me*, my Father will love *him*:" as if identifying love to Himself

[1] J. Parker.

[2] Thomas à Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, bk. ii. ch. i.

with love to the Father. And look at that wondrous union, the consciousness of which speaks in "*We* will come." "*We* will come," together, hand in hand, if one may so say; or rather, His coming is the Father's coming. Just as in heaven, so closely are they represented as united that there is but one throne "for God and the Lamb"; so on earth, so closely are they represented as united that there is but one coming of the Father in the Son.

¶ This is the only belief, as it seems to me, that will keep this generation from despair and moral suicide. The question for this generation is, Is it possible for men to know God? Science, both of material things and of inward experiences, is more and more unanimous in its proclamation; "Behold! we know not anything;" and the only attitude to take before that great black vault above us is to say, "We know nothing." The world has learned half of a great verse of the Gospel: "No man hath seen God at any time;" nor can see Him. If the world is not to go mad, if hearts are not to be tortured into despair, if morality and enthusiasm and poetry and everything higher and nobler than the knowledge of material phenomena and their sequences is not to perish from the earth, the world must learn the next half of the verse, and say, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Christ shows Himself in indissoluble union with the Father.[1]

2. *The manifestation is abiding.*—That coming is a permanent residence: "We will make our *abode* with him." Very beautiful is it to notice that our Lord here employs that same sweet and significant word with which He began this wonderful series of encouragements, when He said, "In my Father's house are many *mansions*." Yonder they dwell for ever with God; here God in Christ for ever dwells with the loving heart. It is a permanent abode so long as the conditions are fulfilled, but only so long. If self-will, rising in the Christian heart from its torpor and apparent death, reasserts itself and shakes off Christ's yoke, Christ's presence vanishes.

¶ In the last hours of the Holy City there was heard by the trembling priests, amidst the midnight darkness, the motion of departing Deity, and a great voice said: "Let us depart hence;" and to-morrow the shrine was empty, and the day after it was in flames. Brethren, if you would keep the Christ in whom is God,

[1] A. Maclaren.

remember that He cannot be kept but by the act of loving obedience.[1]

¶ "We will make our abode with him," *i.e.* will be *at home*, as is possible where there is reciprocity of love. Where there is reciprocity of love there is what we call friendship. Lazarus was a friend of Jesus, who *loved all*, but had His friendships when on earth, and so He has now.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren.

[2] R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 171.

Christ's Gift of Peace.

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Christ's Gift of Peace.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.—John xiv. 27.

Christ is making His parting bequest to His disciples. He would fain leave them free from care and distress; but He has none of those worldly possessions which men usually lay up for their children and those dependent on them. Houses, lands, clothes, money—He has none. He cannot even secure for those who are to carry on His work an exemption from persecution. He does not leave them, as some initiators have done, stable though new institutions, an empire of recent origin but already firmly established. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." But He does give them that which all other bequests aim at producing: "Peace I leave with you."

¶ These words, touching at all times, were unspeakably affecting in the circumstances of the Speaker and hearers. We know not but they did more to comfort the dispirited "little ones" than all that had been said before. There is a pathos and a music in the very sound of them, apart from their sense, which are wonderfully soothing. We can imagine, indeed, that as they were spoken, the poor disciples were overtaken with a fit of tenderness, and burst into tears. That, however, would do them good. Sorrow is healed by weeping; the sympathy which melts the heart at the same time comforts it. This touching sympathetic farewell is more than a good wish; it is a promise—a promise made by One who knows that the blessing promised is within reach. It is like the cheering word spoken by David to brothers in affliction: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."[1]

[1] A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 396.

I.

The Source of Peace.

Here we are directed to the true Source of peace. Jesus claims that He is the real fountainhead, the author and depositary, of peace.

1. Jesus defines the peace which He was leaving to the disciples as that peace which He had Himself enjoyed: "*My* peace I give unto you,"—as one hands over a possession he has himself tested, the shield or helmet that has served him in battle. "That which has protected Me in a thousand fights I make over to you." The peace which Christ desires His disciples to enjoy is that which characterized Himself; the same serenity in danger, the same equanimity in troublous circumstances, the same freedom from anxiety about results, the same speedy recovery of composure after something had for a moment ruffled the calm surface of His demeanour. This is what He makes over to His people; this is what He makes possible to all who serve Him.

¶ One can give to another only what one has owned oneself, and as soon as Jesus makes His will and leaves peace to the Twelve, it comes to our mind that He has endowed them with the chiefest good, and has given what, beyond all men that ever lived, He Himself enjoyed. He had neither houses nor lands. One other thing He did not have, unrest. He had shame and suffering. One other thing He did have—rest. With evident fitness and intense conviction He could face a crowd of harassed, overdriven, hopeless people, heavy laden in soul and body, and offer them rest. Never had any one seen Jesus disturbed in soul, save in grief for a friend's death, or in pity for a doomed city, or for some other reason outside Himself. If a multitude would make Him a King, He was not exalted; if they cried, "Crucify him," He was not cast down. It mattered nothing to Him what was said of Him, or done with Him; and through accumulated hardships, disappointments, injustices, cruelties, Jesus preserved His high serenity. Whatever storms beat on the outer coast of His life, His soul was anchored in the fair haven of peace.[1]

¶ Two painters each painted a picture to illustrate his conception of rest. The first chose for his scene a still lone lake

[1] J. Watson, *The Upper Room*, 96.

among the far-off mountains. The second threw on his canvas a thundering waterfall, with a fragile birch tree bending over the foam; at the fork of a branch, almost wet with the cataract's spray, a robin sat on its nest. The first was only stagnation; the last was rest. For in rest there are always two elements—tranquillity and energy; silence and turbulence; creation and destruction; fearlessness and fearfulness. Thus it was in Christ.[1]

2. How did Jesus come by this peace? By unfaltering obedience to the Father's will, and by utter self-sacrifice. His peace was the fruit of a hard-won victory.

Whatever were His peculiar natural aids of spiritual genius and sensibility, Christ attained His greatness by His own faithfulness to the occasions and intimations which the Father gave Him. If we lose hold of this, we lose the whole value of the Christian life and doctrine. The secret means by which the Almighty Spirit prepares His instruments, the mode and the extent of His intercourse with the soul of Christ—of these we offer no explanation or theory; but the character that grew up under this culture can never by a healthy religion be separated from the personal will of Christ, or be otherwise regarded than as the result of a voluntary faithfulness to the grace of God. Even when a forced flower is made to exhibit summer's bloom on winter's bosom, the blossoming is due not to culture only but to the nature on which it was exerted, which here offers no resistance but yields up all its hidden glories to the hand that tends it; surrounded with a special atmosphere, and in special circumstances, the fitness within, the genial nature, repaid the care and burst into beauty. And so with Christ,—if the Father was the Husbandman the Son was the spiritual Vine; if the culture was of God, the harmonious development of all that was in that rich and blessed nature was through the willing obedience that offered no resistance to the heavenly tending; if the influences were of God's holy grace, the answering faithfulness was of God's holy Child. And the true distinction of Him who, by reason of a perfect obedience, is as the only Son of God, was that through a holy will the spiritual influences of the Father did produce their righteous fruit; that no Divine soliciting was rejected because

[1] Henry Drummond, *Pax Vobiscum*, 263.

it involved Him in awful duties; that to Him the only true life, life eternal, was life in and with God.[1]

> Lord, I had chosen another lot,
> But then I had not chosen well;
> Thy choice and only Thine is good:
> No different lot, search heaven or hell,
> Had blessed me, fully understood;
> None other, which Thou orderest not.[2]

II.

The Bestowal of Peace.

Christ here shares with His people His peculiar secret. He makes a bequest, He bestows a gift.

1. "Not as the world giveth"—not the peace of ease, but of struggle; not of self-content, but of self-sacrifice; not of yielding to evil, but of conflict with it; not of accommodation to the world, but by the subjugation of it. And so He adds, "I have overcome the world." It is a strange paradox, this peace of conflict; it is the peace of an Imperial Spirit which by its own victory rises above human circumstances.

¶ In one of her shorter poems Mrs. Browning asks the question, "What is the best thing in the world?" Various answers are suggested, but the only one which the poetess regards as final and conclusive is this: "Something out of it, I think." Yes, the best thing in the world is something *outside* the world, something which the world does not contain, and which it cannot give.[3]

¶ When we look abroad upon the sea, or the silent hills as they sleep in the tranquil folds of the evening light, and say, How peaceful they are! we mean not merely that the wind is down or the air is still, but that Nature rests in her inner central depths. It is such an inward reality—quiet within the soul, a restful life beneath all other life—that Christ gives to them that are His. It is something deeper than sense, or intellect, or passion, or all the shows of that life which we can see, or hear,

[1] J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, 175.
[2] C. G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 123.
[3] J. Law Wilson, *Helpful Words for Daily Life*, 62.

or touch. It is no mere harmony of natural powers—although it is also this; but it is a positive spiritual endowment—a gift from the Divine—something which at once settles and stays the spirit on a foundation that cannot be moved, though the earth be removed, and the waters roar and be troubled.[1]

2. Christ gives His peace by bringing us to the same source whence He had it Himself—by bringing us to God, by making us one with God, and so bringing us into harmony with the true law of the Spirit's life, which is to live, not by the perishing things of earth, but by the unseen and the eternal. As the physician brings peace to the body by bringing it into harmony with the law of its life, with the conditions of health; as the teacher gives intellectual peace by revealing to the mind the truth that it seeks after, so that it can apprehend it and rest upon it—so Christ gives us peace of spirit by bringing us into harmony with God's will.

¶ We are purposed for union with our Lord. The Scriptures resound with this teaching from end to end. Every call in its pages is a call to a rectified communion with our Maker. That union has been broken, and broken by nothing but sin. And if peace is to be regained, the union must be restored. But that union must not be a mere cuticle relationship; not one of words or of ritual, or created by the flimsy ligaments of sects. It must be the union of mind with mind, God's thought rising into our thought as the sap of the vine into the receptive branch. It must be the union of conscience with conscience, our moral sense scrupulously reflecting the judgments of the Lord, as a clock in direct connexion with Greenwich registers the royal time. It must be the union of will with will, my will lifted like a sail while the breath of the Lord blows upon it, moving my life in the appointed way. It must be the union of heart with heart, God and man sharing common sorrows and common joys. This is peace: man's life moving in God's life in frictionless communion.[2]

3. Christ's peace reaches the heart and conscience. There is only one way for a man to be at peace with himself through and through, and that is that he should put the guidance of his life into the hands of Jesus Christ, and let Him do with it as He will.

[1] J. Tulloch, *Some Facts of Religion and of Life*, 56.
[2] J. H. Jowett, in the *British Congregationalist*, Aug. 6, 1908, p. 122.

There is one power, and only one, that can draw after it all the multitudinous heaped waters of the weltering ocean, and that is the quiet, silver moon in the heavens that pulls the tidal wave, into which melt and merge all currents and small breakers, and rolls it round the whole earth. And so Christ, shining down, lambent and gentle, but changeless, from the darkest of our skies, will draw, in one great surge of harmonized motion, all the otherwise contradictory currents of our stormy souls. "My peace I give unto you."

¶ The peace of a quiet conscience, as the great dramatist has told us, is far above all earthly dignities. For the honours of earth may be thick upon a man, and yet he may never know one hour's happiness. But with the conscience at rest, and its light shining like a very candle of the Lord, the believer's life is well balanced. He knows no fear of God save filial and holy fear, no fear of man, no fear of the future, and no fear of hell. Where it dwells, the peace of God shuts out all fear.[1]

¶ It is told of Dante that after many wanderings he reached a monastery and stood before the door. Thrice they asked him, "What wouldest thou?" and he broke the silence at last with the one word, "*Peace.*"[2]

¶ In the inn of Bethlehem there were many going to and fro, and much hurry and disquietude, while caravans were unlading or making up their complement of passengers, and the divan presented a spectacle of many costumes, and resounded with wrangling, and barter, and merriment. But in a stable hard by there was a tender joy too deep for words, and a stillness of adoration which seemed to shut out the outer world. . . . The soul of man is a noisy hostelry, full of turmoil and disquietude, and giving entertainment to every vain and passing thought which seeks admittance there. But when Christ comes, and takes up His abode in the heart, He reduces it to order and peace; and though it may move amid the excitements and confusions of life, yet hath it an inner stillness which they cannot disturb or destroy; for the King of Peace is there, and peace is the purchase of His cross, and the last legacy of His love, and His ancient promise to His people.[3]

How shall I quiet my heart? How shall I keep it still?
How shall I hush its tremulous start at tidings of good or ill?

[1] W. J. Armitage, *The Fruit of the Spirit*, 32.
[2] F. E. Ridgeway, *Calls to Service*, 220.
[3] E. M. Goulburn.

How shall I gather and hold contentment and peace and rest,
Wrapping their sweetness, fold on fold, over my troubled breast?

The Spirit of God is still, and gentle and mild and sweet,
What time His omnipotent, glorious will guideth the worlds at His feet;
Controlling all lesser things, this turbulent heart of mine,
He keepeth us under His folded wings in a peace serene—divine.

So shall I quiet my heart, so shall I keep it still,
So shall I hush its tremulous start at tidings of good or ill;
So shall I silence my soul with a peacefulness deep and broad,
So shall I gather Divine control in the infinite quiet of God.

4. Christ's peace reconciles us to our brother man. Man will not be at peace with man because he is ready to drift with every stream. That is the false peace, the peace of the Vicar of Bray! Peace can never be gained by the surrender of sacred conviction. But a man has gone a long way towards the attainment of peace with his brother when he is willing to think of himself as only a part, and not the whole, of the human race. He has gone a long way towards union when he consistently thinks of himself as a soloist, and not a chorus. There will then be in his life a delicate considerateness, and he will be willing to fit in with other people with courtesy and grace.

¶ Peace, then, was made. "I bury the hatchet," said Callières, "in a deep hole, and over the hole I place a great rock, and over the rock I turn a river, that the hatchet may never be dug up again."[1]

III.

The Potency of Peace.

Christ bids His disciples realize the potency of their new possession. The citadel of their soul is now invulnerable. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."

1. This peace *becomes the antidote to all dismay and despondency.*—In the slow sad experience of life a Christian is in no

[1] F. Parkman, "Count Frontenac," *Works*, viii. 465.

wise exempt from losses and failures. It may be that he will realize that the argosy of his earthly hopes and plans has suffered shipwreck: yet the Lord is faithful who has promised, not "I will give thee success," but "I will give thee rest." Or he may find himself bereft and desolate and haunted with the dread of bleak, solitary years to come. Time, the subtle thief of youth, will rob him of most treasures at last, except that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. As we gaze down the shadowy avenue of our own future, who would not quail to think of those dark possibilities which it conceals, if he could not hear the Voice which says, "My peace I give unto you: let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"?

¶ One of the greatest proofs of the blessed and eternal character of Christianity is that it applies to, and satisfies, the very deepest want and craving of our nature. The deepest want of man is not a desire for happiness, but a craving for peace; not a wish for the gratification of every desire, but a craving for the repose of acquiescence in the will of God; and it is this that Christianity promises.[1]

¶ What rest is to the body, peace is to the mind. Peace internal, peace external, peace eternal, peace with men, peace with God, peace with oneself. "Seek God," says Fénelon, "within yourself, and you will assuredly find Him, and with Him peace and joy. One word from Christ calmed the troubled sea. One glance from Him to us can do the same within us now."[2]

¶ Peace is what all desire, but all do not care for the things that pertain unto true peace.

My peace is with the humble and gentle of heart; in much patience shall thy peace be.

If thou wilt hear me and follow my voice, thou shalt be able to enjoy much peace.

What then shall I do, Lord?

In every matter look to thyself, as to what thou sayest; and direct thy whole attention unto this, to please me alone, and neither to desire nor to seek any thing besides me.

But of the words or deeds of others, judge nothing rashly; neither do thou entangle thyself with things not entrusted unto thee. Thus it may come to pass that thou mayest be little or seldom disturbed.

[1] F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, iii. 138.

[2] Lord Avebury, *Peace and Happiness*, 356.

But never to feel any disturbance at all, nor to suffer any trouble of mind or body, belongs not to this life, but to the state of eternal rest.[1]

2. It is a peace *superior to outward circumstances*.—The world has tried hard to put an end to the Christian's peace, and it has never been able to accomplish that. The whole might of our enemies cannot take it away. Poverty cannot destroy it; the Christian in his rags can have peace with God. Sickness cannot mar it; lying on his bed, the saint is joyful in the midst of the fires. Persecution cannot ruin it, for persecution cannot separate the believer from Christ, and while he is one with Christ his soul is full of peace. "Put your hand here," said the martyr to his executioner, when he was led to the stake, "put your hand here, and now put your hand on your own heart, and feel which beats the hardest, and which is the most troubled." The executioner was struck with awe, when he found the Christian man as calm as though he were going to a wedding feast, while he himself was all agitation at having to perform so desperate a deed.

¶ No harm can come to the least of the little ones who believe in Christ, and are faithful and true to Him. At the centre of the wild cyclone, which bears devastation and ruin in its awful sweep, there is a spot which is so quiet that a leaf is scarcely stirred, where a little child might sleep undisturbed. So in the heart of this world's most terrific storms and convulsions there is a place of perfect security. It is the place of duty and trust. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."[2]

When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean,
And billows wild contend with angry roar,
'Tis said, far down beneath the wild commotion,
That perfect stillness reigneth evermore.

Far, far beneath, the noise of tempest dieth,
And silver waves chime ever peacefully;
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the Sabbath of that deeper sea.

So, in the heart that knows Thy love, O Saviour,
There is a temple, sacred evermore,
And all the tumult of life's angry voices
Dies in hushed silence at its peaceful door.

[1] Thomas à Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, bk. iii. ch. xxv.
[2] J. R. Miller, *Glimpses through Life's Windows*, 132.

Far, far away, the roar of passion dieth,
And loving thoughts rise calm and peacefully;
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the soul that dwells, O Lord, in Thee.

O rest of rests! O peace serene, eternal!
Thou ever livest, and Thou changest never;
And in the secret of Thy presence dwelleth
Fulness of joy, for ever and for ever![1]

3. It is a peace that *keeps the heart pure and fresh.*

¶ A tourist writes of a spring as sweet as any that ever gushed from sunny hillside, which one day he found by the sea, when the tides had ebbed away. Taking the cup, he tasted the water, and it was sweet. Soon the sea came again, and poured its bitter surf over the little spring, hiding it out of sight.

Like a fair star, thick buried in a cloud,
Or life in the grave's gloom,
The well, enwrapped in a deep watery shroud,
Sank to its tomb.

When the tide ebbed away, the tourist stood once more by the spring to see if the brackish waves had left their bitterness in its waters; but they were sweet as ever.

While waves of bitterness rolled o'er its head,
Its heart had folded deep
Within itself, and quiet fancies led,
As in a sleep;

Till, when the ocean loosed his heavy chain
And gave it back to-day,
Calmly it turned to its own life again,
And gentle way.

So does Christ's peace refresh the poisoned heart and jaded spirit.

If sin be in the heart,
The fairest sky is foul, and sad the summer weather,
The eye no longer sees the lambs at play together,
The dull ear cannot hear the birds that sing so sweetly,
And all the joy of God's good earth is gone completely,
If sin be in the heart.

[1] Harriet Beecher Stowe.

If peace be in the heart,
The wildest winter storm is full of solemn beauty,
The midnight lightning flash but shows the path of duty,
Each living creature tells some new and joyous story,
The very trees and stones all catch a ray of glory,
If peace be in the heart.[1]

[1] Charles Francis Richardson.

The True Vine.

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The True Vine.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit.—John xv. 1, 2.

1. Our Lord here opens the book of nature for the last time to complete the training of the Twelve. It had furnished many illustrations for the parables and discourses of the past three years, but none is more rich in suggestion than this of the vine and its branches.

2. What suggested this lovely parable of the vine and the branches is equally unimportant and undiscoverable. The great truth in this chapter, applied in manifold directions, and viewed in many aspects, is that of the living union between Christ and those who believe in Him, and the parable of the vine and the branches affords the foundation for all that follows.

The subject may be considered under three heads:—

I. The Vine.
II. The Vine and its Branches.
III. The Husbandman.

I.

The Vine.

"I am the true vine."

Two currents of thought are united by Christ when He speaks of Himself as "the true, the ideal vine."

1. The Hebrew nation and Church in Old Testament times is called a vine The Psalmist says: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it." Isaiah

says: "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." Jeremiah says: "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" Ezekiel says of the kings of David's house: "Thy mother was like a vine, in thy blood, planted by the waters; she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters. . . . And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land." The vine was used as an emblem of the Jewish nation under the Maccabees in the second century before Christ, and appears on their coins. But the people of Israel failed to live a life in harmony with the emblem. They did not bring forth fruit to God. They were not the True Vine.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has been planted in the earth like a great fruit-bearing tree, to do what the Hebrew nation failed to do. He is the "true," that is, the genuine, the real, the perfect Vine; not a mere shadow of it, but its very root and stem, at once living and life-giving. He has been planted in the world of mankind and in the soil of human nature, that our race may yield fruit to the glory of God.

¶ The departure of Israel from God and their ingratitude is illustrated by the comparison with "wild grapes," "the degenerate plant of a strange vine," "an empty vine," "grapes of gall." Finally, our Lord has selected the vine as the type of Himself in His intimate union with His disciples, who bore fruit through their union with Him: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." "I am the vine, ye are the branches."[1]

2. But Christ may also have called Himself the true vine in distinction from the material vine, the image of which He had conjured up in the mind of His disciples. The images of the Bible, especially those employed by Christ, are not merely poetic figures. The outward is a real symbol of the invisible world; physical growths are a parable of spiritual growths, the kingdom of nature is a picture of the kingdom of grace, because both come from the same creative hand, are made subject to the same great laws, and are under the same great King. The physical vine is the shadow; Christ is the true, real vine, whom the shadow symbolizes; and it will last when the shadow has passed away.

[1] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*, 413.

¶ The material creations of God are only inferior examples of that finer spiritual life and organism in which the creature is raised up to partake of the Divine nature.[1]

II.

The Vine and the Branches.

One of the most important aspects of Christ, the Vine, is His relationship to His people, the branches of the Vine, and this aspect is set forth in the fifth verse of the same chapter: "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

1. There is a personal relation. As in other connexions of thought ("I am the light of the world," "I am the bread of life," and the like), Jesus here fixes the eye of faith on His own person; but in the present saying He regards Himself as inclusive of His members, who participate in His own life, and, as it were, complete it. He says, not "I am the root, I am the stem," but "I am the vine—and ye are the branches," presenting Himself and the Church as one organic whole. Thus we see in Jesus the Incarnate Son, a new stock of humanity, planted of God in the earth, able to expand His own life over others, and so to include their lives in His own, and (if we may use the language here suggested) to ramify Himself in them. This capacity is the consequence of the conjunction in His own person of the human and the Divine natures; for by the one He enters into union with us in the flesh, and by the other He communicates Himself to us as "a quickening Spirit."

¶ Christ was the Son of God. But remember in what sense He ever used this name—Son of God because Son of Man. He claims Sonship in virtue of His Humanity. Now, in the whole previous revelation through the Prophets, etc., one thing was implied—only through man can God be known; only through a perfect man, perfectly revealed. Hence He came, the brightness of His Father's glory, the *express image* of His person. Christ, then, must be loved as Son of Man before He can be adored as Son of God.[2]

[1] Dean Alford.

[2] F. W. Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 417.

2. There is a vital union. The figure of the vine offers a type of manifold, of combined, of fruitful energy. It presents to us Christ and the believers in Christ in their highest unity, as a living whole. The figure of the shepherd and the sheep does not indicate relationship so close and wonderful. The shepherd has one nature and the sheep another. Shepherd and sheep are separate and independent beings. What the sheep receive is not directly from the shepherd himself, but only through his agency. The unity of the stem and the branches is organic and living. The branch has a nature like that of the tree. It is the prolongation of its tissues and fibres. The sap that is the life of the trunk is the life of the boughs. A relationship very close indeed is denoted. Stalk and limbs have a resembling nature. Stem and branch perform similar vital functions, are animated by a common principle of life, and act together for the attainment of the same identical ends.

¶ Some day you go down to the shore. Your dingy lies in a wee reed-fringed inlet of one of the many bays that indent the coast of Long Island. You get into your boat and shove off the yellow sand. You drop your oars in and then pull away, away down the winding inlet, from behind the fringe of reeds, across the little bar, over the rocking waves of the bay, out into the deep, green, long, low swell of the limitless ocean. From the inlet into the ocean! And where did the inlet end, and where did the ocean begin? And what is the difference between the water of the inlet and the water of the ocean? The same elements combine in both; the same winds that blow in from the distances sweep over the surface of both; the same tides which roll in from the middle seas swell the waves of both. The difference is shallow and unplumbed, land-locked and unlimited. But the likeness is more than the difference, the likeness of water, wind and tides which bring the ocean into the reed-fringed inlet, and carry you out of the inlet upon the bosom of the shoreless flood.[1]

¶ If we pour a glass of wine into a glass of water, and mix them, the water will be in the wine, and the wine in the water. So in like manner all that we do, while our own acts, should be manifestations of the indwelling Saviour.[2]

(1) In this vital union the branches are wholly dependent on the vine. The relation in which the vine stands to the branches

[1] T. C. McClelland, *The Mind of Christ*, 55.
[2] *Hudson Taylor's Choice Sayings*, 1.

in the natural world is, on the part of the vine, a relation of supreme support and nourishment. It provides, it contains, it distributes the life by which the whole tree lives. Without the stem, without the root, the branches are nothing and can do nothing. Instead of bearing fruit they can only wither and perish. A branch is nothing of itself. It is only as it abides in the vine that it has either value or continued existence. And as it is in the natural world so is it in the spiritual counterpart —the kingdom of grace. Jesus Christ, the True Vine, is the supreme and only source of spiritual life to His disciples. Without Him they can do nothing. Without Him they *are* nothing. It is only as they abide in Him that they can bring forth *any* fruit, not to speak of bringing forth *much* fruit. A Christian's life, in one word, is "hid with Christ in God." Christ *is* his life, the source and the sustaining power of his spiritual being.

It is impossible to conceive a more complete image of total dependence than that of the branch on the vine. It is not a partial dependence. One tree may give rise to another tree; but the new plant, whether seedling or sucker, becomes a separate individual, and derives nothing more from the original tree. There is dependence at the beginning, but no further. So, for a while, a child is dependent on the parent; but by and by he is cast entirely on his own resources. The living and thriving branch, on the contrary, is always dependent. To be removed from the stem is death and destruction.

¶ Without something higher and nobler than yourself you will do nothing good. You must have an aim to evolve yourself to. This is an imperceptible and a natural thing. You do not *think* about breathing. It is natural. Your mother has thrown a sacredness over your life. Her name brings to you purity and love in their highest forms; you are bound to something higher, and through her you are bound to Christ. Thus naturally you are evolved into the Perfect Man. You reflect Him everywhere— in other words, you are growing like Him. A man at college who reflects Christ is a man who is bound to Christ, and *thus* the "man" in him rules his life. You must bind yourselves to Christ to get it at first hand; you must become acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ as your best Friend.[1]

[1] *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 472.

Thou art the Vine,
And I, O Jesus, am a branch of Thine;
And day by day from Thee
New life flows unto me.
Nought have I of my own,
But all my strength is drawn from Thee alone.

As, severed from the tree, the branch must die,
So even I
Could never live this life of mine
Apart from Thee, O living Vine;
But Thou dost dwell in me,
And I in Thee!
Yea, Thine own life through me doth flow,
And in Thyself I live and grow.[1]

(2) The vine is nothing without its branches. It is the branches that bear the fruit, and this is their office. Jesus wants us, and, with all reverence be it said, He cannot do without us. Of course, if He had pleased, He could; but since He has chosen to make us branches in the vine, He requires us each one. All are in the vine, and all are needed.

A vine bears fruit—how? Through its branches. On the branches and on their fruitfulness all the vine's fruitfulness depends. One branch may wither, yet another bear; but if it were possible that all should fail, there would be no fruit. It is a wonderful honour, then, to be called "branches" by Him who is the Vine. It means no less than this: "I entrust My cause to you; I am content to wait for My fruit till you bear it; through you I choose to live My life; with all My yearning for fruit I inspire you; what you bear, I shall own."

3. The branches are dependent on one another.

(1) As we are one with Christ and Christ with us, so we are one with other men. Our own bodies are so transitory, we seem to stand so far apart from one another, the sense of individuality within us is so much stronger and so much more obtrusive than the sense of dependence, that we are apt to lose sight of our intimate and indissoluble connexion with others as men and as Christian men. Here again the image of the tree comes to our

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 32.

assistance. Nothing could show us more clearly that there is a unity between us as we now work together in our several places, and a unity between us and all who have gone before us. We are bound together in the present, even as the tree has one life, though the life is divided through a thousand forms, and we are children of the former time, even as the tree preserves in itself the results of its past life, which has reached, it may be, over a thousand years. These two ideas of a present unity and a historic unity are not equally easy to grasp. We can all see the present unity of the parts of the tree; we can all rise from that to the conception of the unity of men in the nation or in the Church. However imperfectly the idea is worked out in thought, however imperfectly it is realized in practice, yet it is not wholly strange or ineffective among us. But that other unity, the unity of one generation with another which has been and with another which will be hereafter, is as yet unfamiliar to most men. The tree may help us to learn it. Cut down the tree, and you will read its history in the rings of its growth. We count and measure them, and reckon that so long ago there was a year of dearth, so long ago a year of abundance. The wound has been healed, but the scar remains to witness to its infliction. The very moss upon its bark tells how the tree stood to the rain and the sunshine. The direction of its branches reveals the storms which habitually beat upon them. We call the whole perennial, and yet each year sees what is indeed a new tree rise over the gathered growths of earlier time and die when it has fulfilled its work. And all this is true of the society of men. We are what a long descent has made us.

¶ Moses was a thinker; Aaron was a speaker. Aaron was to be to Moses instead of a mouth, and Moses was to be to Aaron instead of God. Thus one man has to be the complement of another. No one man has all gifts and graces. The ablest and best of us cannot do without our brother. There is to be a division of labour in the great work of conquering the world for God. The thinker works; so does the speaker; so does the writer. We are a chain, not merely isolated links; we belong to one another, and only by fraternal and zealous co-operation can we secure the great results possible to faith and labour. Some men are fruitful of suggestion. They have wondrous powers of indication; but there their special power ends. Other men have great gifts of expression; they can put thoughts into the best words;

they have the power of music; they can charm, fascinate, and persuade. Such men are not to undervalue one another; they are to co-operate as fellow-labourers in the Kingdom of God.[1]

(2) Yet the Christian life—the Christian life, that is, in its widest sense—is manifold. The loveliness and grandeur and power of the Christian life all spring from the infinite variety of its forms. In some respects the Pauline image of the body and its members presents this lesson to us with more completeness; but the image of the vine—the tree—brings out one side of it which is lost there. In the tree we can actually trace how the variety is all fashioned out of one original element. Step by step we can see how the leaf passes into the flower, the fruit, the seed. Each living part of the true vine is ideally the same and yet individually different. Its differences are given to it to fit it for the discharge of special offices in its life. If therefore we seek to obliterate them or to exaggerate them, we mar its symmetry and check its fruitfulness. We may perhaps have noticed how in a rose the coloured flower-leaf sometimes goes back to the green stem-leaf, and the beauty of the flower is at once destroyed. Just so is it with ourselves. If we affect a work other than that for which we are made, we destroy that which we ought to further. Our special service, and all true service is the same, lies in doing that which we find waiting to be done by us. There is need, as we know, of the utmost energy of all. There is need of the particular differences of all. We cannot compare the relative value of the leaves, and the tendrils, and the flowers in the vine: it is healthy, and vigorous, and fruitful because all are there. We cannot clearly define the minute features by which leaf is distinguished from leaf, or flower from flower, but we can feel how the whole gains in beauty by the endless combination of their harmonious contrasts.

¶ It is the instinct of Christianity to be glad that God has broken the universe into little pieces, because they are living pieces. It is her instinct to say, "Little children, love one another," rather than to tell one large person to love himself. This is the intellectual abyss between Buddhism and Christianity, that for the Buddhist or Theosophist personality is the fall of man, for the Christian it is the purpose of God, the whole point of his cosmic idea.[2]

[1] J. Parker.

[2] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 243.

III.

The Husbandman.

"My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit."

Some readers, and not a few commentators, not noting the distinctive character of the first verse, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman," treat the whole passage as merely a revelation of the close union of believers with Christ. They overlook the relation to the Father. Overlooking this, they necessarily have an imperfect view of the other; for it is from the relation of Christ to the Father that the relation of believers to Christ takes its character. What the branches receive by abiding in the Vine is determined by the nature and circumstances of that Vine; by its being the True Vine, and having the Father for its Husbandman. To put this in other words, we lose much if we read here no more than a comparison to the relation which the branches of any sort of tree, good or bad, wild or uncultivated, bear to their stem. The teaching is immeasurably illuminated by the thought that the tree in question is that tree which bears the richest fruit, and that by the thought of the Divine Husbandman tending it, and watching for the fruit, with a view to which He planted it, prunes it, and will glorify it.

1. *God is the Husbandman of the True Vine.*—Christ ever lived in the spirit of what He once said: "The Son can do nothing of himself." As dependent as a vine is on a husbandman for the place where it is to grow, for its fencing in and watering and pruning, Christ felt Himself entirely dependent on the Father every day for the wisdom and the strength to do the Father's will.

¶ When Christ came into this world to establish His Church, He did not set aside the Divine claim upon the creature, but He came to enable the creature to fulfil the claims of the Creator. Consequently, in all the acts which He did as Man, He recognized the will of the Father as supreme. He did not cease Himself to possess the fulness of the Divine power, but His acts were to be perfect according to the measure of human morality, although

containing the power of God. That power gave them dignity, but did not exempt them from the necessities of created life. He submitted to receive the treatment proper to man, but He never withdrew Himself from the love proper to the Son of God.

We may learn from this that God's moral government of mankind is not fixed by any arbitrary or changeful standard. God rules mankind according to law, and that law is suited to the nature of man. All that God appoints for man is fixed by the inherent requirements of man's nature. The moral law is not a legislation alongside of the physical law of man's natural condition, but it is the assertion of what man's physical nature demands. It interprets those demands for us, which perhaps we might not find out for ourselves. It tends to the development of man's nature, and now that man is fallen it tends to his recovery. Nothing could be altered in that which God has ordained without a proportionate injury to man's physical well-being. The Creator is the Lawgiver and His word is the explanation of His works.

So the character of a husbandman implies the cultivation of existing powers, not a transformation so that one plant should bring forth different kinds of fruit. God watches over Christ so as to develop by His providence the true glory of the Humanity. He does not seek to make the manhood of Christ fruitful in any way contrary to the nature of man. Christ's human nature was fitted to germinate in every form of humanity. It possessed the virtues necessary for every individual character, so that His righteousness might really be adequate to all the needs of all times and all ages. The new regenerate Humanity should derive its completeness from the moral nature of Christ, cherished by the providence of God as the great Husbandman.[1]

2. *The Husbandman is also the Father.*—When the vine-dresser, in the literal sense, deals with his plants, he finds that they are filled with a life and purpose quite independent of himself. He has to impose his own purpose upon something not wholly suited either for it or for his methods; and so, it may be, he impairs its natural vigour. But God is the Creator as well as the Gardener; and there is not in His creatures any real purpose or meaning other than His own.

(1) The Husbandman who cultivates this "plant of the Lord" is the very Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. "My Father." The relationship does not belong to the vine as a vine, but to the Person of Him who assumes the humanity which the vine

[1] R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, ii. (pt. ii.) 6.

symbolizes. Thus is brought out the relation of Christ personally to God as Father, and in His created nature to the Divine Providence as moral governor. While culture is according to law, it is nevertheless a personal watchfulness that is exercised. So God does not merely leave Christ to go through the world anyhow. There was a real fatherly care with which He assigned all the events of His life as He, in His infinite wisdom, knew to be most suitable for the development of His personal predestination.

¶ A husbandman cares for the plant as a living thing. The Father cares for the spiritual Vine as having the life of Heaven. As it is the Body of His only begotten Son, He cares for it with all the love which He has for His only begotten Son.[1]

(2) God, the Husbandman, is our Father through Christ. The Father is the source and spring of redeeming grace through Christ. Many people think — at all events, they feel — that Christ is their friend, but that God the Father is stern and unbending, almost resentful, ready to swoop upon them for every offence, like an eagle upon its quarry; if the Son did not restrain Him, He would take a positive delight in visiting condign punishment upon sinners. That is a mistaken conception of the disposition of God the Father. True, He is just, and cannot look with any degree of allowance upon sin; but the Son is also just, as is shown by more than one stern rebuke that fell from His lips. However, the truth we now wish to make clear is that God the Father is wondrous kind, filled with love, moved by compassion, and so desirous of our well-being that the scheme of redemption had its inception in His heart, and that, of His own volition, He sent His Son into the world to bring it back to Himself.

Surely, if anything could reconcile us to the culture that the Husbandman imposes upon us it is the name He bears. "*My* Father," says Christ; and if Christ's Father, therefore also *our* Father. For He Himself has taught us so to think of God: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Whatever, then, the discipline of Christian life may be—however sharp and hard to bear—of this we may rest satisfied, that it is such, and only such, as a Father's heart suggests, and as a Father's hand may execute.

[1] R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, ii. (pt. ii.) 9.

¶ Does not Christ Himself always tell us about a *Father*, not a Judge? Why should you not take His own way of it? "The Father" is the key to God's character, and to all true knowledge of Him; and it is only when we understand that that we cease to fear, and love becomes possible.

Perhaps you have gathered hard thoughts of God from some person whom you have believed to be good and religious; but much religion is harsh in its character, and you should try to get rid of any such impression, and to think of Him as He is in Christ. "He that hath seen me hath seen the *Father*."[1]

> And so, encompass'd with our flesh, He came,
> Thy Son, Thyself—to make less far and high
> The distant Godhead. Now Thy heavens declare
> No far Creator, but a Father there![2]

3. *The Husbandman and the Branches.*—The vine existed to bear fruit. It was useless for anything else. Ezekiel brought home that thought to the exiles in Babylon. "What is the vine tree more than any tree, the vine branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to make any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel: the fire hath devoured both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned; is it profitable for any work?" The sole glory of the vine was its fruitfulness.

So God makes fruitfulness the test. Not leaf, not colour, not wood, but fruit. In other words, God's great test is not profession, not privilege, not apparent power, but the fruit of the Spirit in the life and character. If there is no fruit there is no life. If there is fruit, it is an evidence that Christ is abiding in the soul. He acts, therefore, on the same principle that He laid down for the guidance of His people when He said, "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

¶ We are not created in Christ Jesus out of good works, but unto good works. We do not make ourselves Christians any more than we make ourselves human beings. Works are the fruit of life, not the root. The works of the flesh are uncleanness, hatred, and their bad train; the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and their good train. Life works from root to fruit; logic argues from fruit to root. We grow from our roots; we are known by our fruits.[3]

[1] *Principal Story*, 146. [2] J. Sharp.
[3] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 10.

(1) The husbandman takes away the branches that bear no fruit. Christ's words are: "Every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit"; so the question arises, How can a branch be in Christ and bear no fruit? Calvin's explanation that "in me" is equivalent to "supposed to be in me" is inadmissible. It does not explain Christ's words, but substitutes others for them. Alford's explanation is better, but it labours under the serious disadvantage of substituting for Christ's declaration, "I am the vine," the very different declaration that the visible Church is the vine. "The vine is the visible Church here, of which Christ is the *inclusive* head; the vine *contains* the branches, hence the unfruitful as well as the fruitful are *in me.*" But to be in the visible Church and to be in living communion with Christ are very different things. We should rather say that Christ here lays down, in a simile, the general law that to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. If the soul, in the measure in which it has knowledge of Christ, bears Christian fruit, it will grow more and more into oneness with and likeness to Christ; if, on the other hand, it does not realize the fruits of its knowledge in a life fruitful in Christian works, it will gradually lose its knowledge and become separated from Christ. Thus both the grafting into and the separating from the vine are in the spiritual experience gradual processes, and they depend on the fidelity with which the conscious branch avails itself of its privileges, and shows itself worthy of larger privilege.[1]

¶ Life is given to us on probation. Whatever be our outward circumstances, the supernatural life is capable of making them fruitful. The fruitfulness of the spiritual vine may be found in the richest or the poorest soil. It is not dependent upon the soil like the earthly tree, which naturally grows there. It has an indestructible life, capable of bringing forth its fruit in every soil, and the life must assert itself by turning to account every condition of outward accident. Riches and poverty, health and sickness, praise and blame, are equally capable of being used to nourish this supernatural fruitfulness. We may not despise earthly gifts, as if we could do without them. If we have them we are responsible for them. But neither may we desire earthly gifts, as if they would enable us to glorify God better than what

[1] Lyman Abbott.

He has given. We are to rise superior to them, knowing that God expects us to show His fructification under the conditions of difficulty which that outward lack may occasion. The branch that is in Christ possesses all that is necessary to become fruitful; and if it be unfruitful, the supernatural virtue will be withdrawn. The branch will be left to its natural deadness and will be cut off. There is one vocation common to us all in Christ. We are called to be saints. This is a vocation that we can all of us fulfil, for the grace of God will not be wanting to us if we seek it rightly; but if we do not fulfil this vocation, so as to have our "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," we must be cut off from Christ by the unsparing hand of the Great Husbandman.[1]

(2) The husbandman "cleanseth" the fruitful branches that they may bear more fruit. The vine is a tree of rampant growth; its branches easily outgrow its power to fill and ripen the fruit. In a fertile soil, and under genial skies, it spreads out its boughs, puts forth a lavish growth of leaves, and forms many a cluster which a wise hand will cut away. If it were allowed to run unchecked, many of the blossoms would never fruit; they would form tendrils instead of clusters; the bunches that might form would be hardly worth the gathering. The husbandman early fixes on the bunches he will preserve, and devotes all his care to the swelling and ripening of these. He stops the branches on which they grow, that the sap may fill the clusters; many a grape is cut out that those which remain may grow large and rich. All the summer through the pruning is continued; the leaves fall that the sun and air may play among the ripening branches, and that the roots may feel the genial warmth in which the tree delights. It seems at first like reckless waste, this constant use of the knife; but it is the prevention of waste, the husbanding of the strength of the vine for fruit that shall be worth the gathering.

Thanks to Thy sovereign grace, O God, if I
  Am graffed in that true vine a living shoot,
  Whose arms embrace the world, and in whose root,
Planted by faith, our life must hidden lie.
But Thou beholdest how I fade and dry!
  Choked with a waste of leaf, and void of fruit,
  Unless Thy spring perennial shall recruit
My sapless branch, still wanting fresh supply.

[1] R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, ii. (pt. ii.) 15.

O cleanse me, then, and make me to abide
Wholly in Thee, to drink Thy heavenly dew,
And, watered daily with my tears to grow!
Thou art the truth, Thy promise is my guide;
Prepare me when Thou comest, Lord, to show
Fruits answering to the stock on which I grow.

¶ In deep dejection of spirit, Mr. Cecil was pacing to and fro in the Botanic Garden at Oxford, when he observed a fine specimen of the pomegranate almost cut through the stem. On asking the gardener the reason, he got an answer which explained the wounds of his own bleeding spirit. "Sir, this tree used to shoot so strong that it bore nothing but leaves. I was, therefore, obliged to cut it in this manner, and when it was almost cut through, then it began to bear plenty of fruit."[1]

¶ A teacher of music, speaking of his most promising pupil, said, "She has full control of her voice, but she lacks soul. If only something would break her heart, she would be the greatest singer in Europe."[2]

[1] J. Hamilton, *Works*, ii. 186.

[2] J. Smith, *Short Studies*, 178.

An Expedient Departure.

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An Expedient Departure.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you.—John xvi. 7.

One of the most distinctive things in the story of Christ's earthly ministry is the perfect calmness which He manifested in regard to the future course and fate of the disciples He had gathered round Him and of the work He had begun. He has a clear gaze forward: no weight of disappointment for His own career cut short is permitted to dull His apprehension of what lies beyond the time of His departure: no overwhelming heaviness or consuming fever of regret possesses Him so strongly as to cloud His vision of what would happen when the Cross had brought His earthly labours to a close; and His thought leaps over Calvary's torture and the sepulchre's darkness to the wondrous processes of spiritual development which would begin with His death.

So untroubled are the clear depths of Christ's soul, so unruffled is His sacred quietude—even here as He is almost entering upon the last experience of pain and lifting the cup of bitterness to His lips—that He can discern the actual relation between His departure from His disciples and the future Divine visitations which His disciples would know; and He can see that for their perfecting in grace it is expedient that He should go away. Truly, this was the Son of God; for man's thought grows feeble and his face grows pale and his heart beats so loudly as to drown all whispers of hope, when he stands before the great crisis of his life: only to the Christ was it given to preserve the perfect serenity of His soul when the supreme moment came and the last dark shadows stretched themselves across His way.

1. "I tell you the truth."—One does not wonder that our

Lord should feel it needful, for the second time, to assure His bewildered and astounded disciples that He is telling them the simple truth. He had told them of the many mansions of the Father's house, that He might still the trouble of their hearts at His departure. "If it were not so, I would have told you." They would feel the force of His appeal to what they knew of His veracity, exactness, and love. And now again: "I tell you the truth. Notwithstanding the sorrow with which My going away has filled your hearts, it is better for you that I should go"—an assertion more difficult to believe than even that about the many mansions.

2. "It is expedient for you that I go away."—Is not the expression used by the Lord something stronger than we should venture to use if we had not His own authority for it? Literally, "It is profitable for you." There is no ambiguity in the word. It is found several times in the Gospels, and always with the same meaning. "It is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell." "If the case is so, . . . it is not expedient to marry." "Whoso shall cause a little one to stumble, it is expedient for him that he should be drowned in the sea." "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people." Of two possible alternatives, that one is preferable which is introduced by the word, "it is expedient." And in the phrase before us, the two alternatives are the departure and the visible presence of the Lord. "It is expedient for you that I go away." It is better for you that I should go and send the Comforter than that I should stay with you in closest earthly fellowship for ever. Better for the world that Jesus should be removed from the eyes of men than that He should lead them to Himself by the magic of His words and the wonder of His works!

¶ Why did Jesus go away? We all remember a time when we could not answer that question. We wished He had stayed, and had been here now. The children's hymn expresses a real human feeling, and our hearts burn still as we read it:—

I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold
I should like to have been with them then;

I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
"Let the little ones come unto Me."

Jesus must have had reasons for disappointing a human feeling so deep, so universal, and so sacred. We may be sure, too, that these reasons intimately concern us. He did not go away because He was tired. It was quite true that He was despised and rejected of men; it was quite true that the pitiless world hated and spurned and trod on Him. But that did not drive Him away. It was quite true that He longed for His Father's house and pined and yearned for His love. But that did not draw Him away. No. He never thought of Himself. It is expedient for *you*, He says, not for Me, that I go.[1]

I.

The Departure of Jesus.

Christ has to recall His disciples from the contemplation of their own impending loss to the great gift which should follow upon that "going" which they deplored, but which they so little understood. He had shielded them hitherto, and the thought that that shelter was to be removed filled their hearts with sorrow. So full were they of their loss that no one asked how this departure affected Him, and thus they were in danger of missing the abiding significance of His departure for themselves. There are three words for "going away" used over and over again in these chapters, and there is a fruitful study to be found in the changes rung on these "bells of sweet accord." Let it suffice to say that departure from the point of view of mere separation passes into the idea of a journey, and thence into that of a goal to be reached, a "going home."

1. It was that parting hour of mysterious thoughts, of agonized affections, which is sometimes experienced when we are sure that death stands at the door and waits; when but a few minutes are given for parting words and loving reciprocations. Only, their Master was in the fulness of life and health. But for this

[1] H. Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 63.

mysterious assurance they could not have thought of His death. He reiterated it in their incredulous ears, and poured out mysterious and lofty consolations—greater thoughts, more spiritual sanctities, more loving sympathies than had ever fallen from His lips before. They were awed and perplexed as well as sorrowful.

2. Then His departure was the disappointment of their greatest hopes. Upon their Jewish standing-ground all their hopes of His Messianic Kingdom were frustrated—they "trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel"; and now He tells them that, instead of sitting upon the throne of His father David, He is about to die. Not only were they losing more than affection ever lost before, but the fabric of their most cherished hopes lay in ruins at their feet. And it seems to have produced in them a stupor of feeling almost approaching to paralysis. "Does none of you even ask Me whither I go? Hath sorrow so entirely filled your heart because I have spoken these things? Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. Whatever sorrow My going away may cause you, it will be to you a transcendent blessing. If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you; and when He is come He will work mightily in men, convincing them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. You cannot understand now the things that I have to say to you concerning this great mission of the Holy Spirit. I can only assure you of its truth and greatness and blessing. It will be to you more than even My personal presence with you."

3. Why, then, was it expedient for them that He should go away?

(1) *Absence is better than presence under certain conditions.*—The influence of the absent is not only sometimes stronger in its degree, it is always purer in its kind, than the influence exerted by presence. Sometimes, dimly, we have been conscious of the truth enshrined in these words. We have recognized the fact that the influence of absence leaves its spirit; and the more we think why we are here, the more we understand it. We are made to be tried, proved, tested, and the conditions of our trial are, or seem to be, whether we will do what is right when we are left to ourselves.

When was it that this or that man began to be so increasingly enterprising and energetic, to take a higher range, to produce his best, to be so wonderfully useful? When, perhaps, the outward support, the soothing praise, the popularity he had enjoyed, ceased to be his; when this and that pleasant prop upon which he had rested was removed. How it set free and drew out the forces latent in him, and made him thenceforth the braver, better, more efficient workman that he was capable of being! Many are the instances — more than we know, doubtless — in which greater and higher achieving, or beautiful developments of character and gift, have been largely due to some painful loss. Not seldom has such loss helped to promote superior performance, to give us noble labours and famous accomplishings with which otherwise the world might never have been blessed. And all that we want often, in order to our becoming more useful or more successful, in order to our attaining the heights that remain afar off, and that we vainly wish we could reach—all that we want often, is not that something should be added to us which we have not, but that we should just *lose* something. While we are crying fretfully, "Oh that such and such things were mine of which others are possessed! then would I conquer and do grandly," the hindrance is not in what is withheld from us, but in what *cleaves* to us—in some little indulged weakness, in some infirmity or false habit of ours, simply to get rid of which would be our transformation into new creatures; would leave us armed and equipped for speedy triumph. Have we not known men concerning whom we have thought, What might they not be and do, if only they could lose a little, here and there?

¶ As the wind extinguishes a taper but kindles the fire, so absence is the death of an ordinary passion, but lends strength to the greater.[1]

¶ Even the holiest influences may deaden spiritual activity. St. Paul himself finds it necessary to detach himself, and though he had known Christ after the flesh, henceforth to know Him so no more. So for those disciples it was worth while to lose Jesus, if they might find for themselves the way into that spiritual world in which they had seen Him moving. For He did not come to be adored by men who could never reach His secret. It

[1] *Maxims of La Rochefoucauld*, 54.

was His will that those who had been given Him should be with Him where He was.[1]

(2) *But Jesus would be with them still, though not in bodily form.*—If we would feel the full force and singularity of this saying of our Lord's, let us put side by side with it that other one, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Why is it that the Apostle says, "Though I want to go, I am bound to stay"? and why is it that the Master says, "It is for your good that I am going," but because of the essential difference in the relation of the two to the people who are to be left, and in the continuance of the work of the two after they had departed? St. Paul knew that when he went, whatever befell those whom he loved and would fain help, he could not stretch a hand to do anything for them. He knew that death dropped the portcullis between him and them, and, whatever their sore need on the one side of the iron gate, he on the other could not succour or save. Jesus Christ said, "It is better for you that I should go," because He knew that all His influences would flow through the grated door unchecked, and that, departed, He would still be the life of them that trusted in Him; and, having left them, would come near them by the very act of leaving them.

When Christ went up to Heaven the Apostles stayed
  Gazing at Heaven with souls and wills on fire,
Their hearts on flight along the track He made,
    Winged by desire.

Their silence spake: "Lord, why not follow Thee?
  Home is not home without Thy Blessed Face,
Life is not life. Remember, Lord, and see,
    Look back, embrace.

Earth is one desert waste of banishment,
  Life is one long-drawn anguish of decay.
Where Thou wert wont to go we also went:
    Why not to-day?"

Nevertheless a cloud cut off their gaze:
  They tarry to build up Jerusalem,
Watching for Him, while thro' the appointed days
    He watches them.

[1] J. Kelman, *Ephemera Eternitatis*, 140.

They do His Will and doing it rejoice,
Patiently glad to spend and to be spent:
Still He speaks to them, still they hear His Voice
And are content.[1]

(3) *He would be nearer than before.*—Our first thought may perhaps be, Who can be so near Jesus now as the Apostles were during all the time that He went in and out among them? Yet these same men found themselves far nearer Him after He had gone away. In the days of His flesh He had sat with them; but after His ascension He not only seemed to hover round them, and brood over them, but He sent His Spirit to dwell within them. And thus believers now, seeing that they possess the indwelling Spirit, are really much nearer the Lord Jesus Christ than Peter and James and John were during the time from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from them.

But God is never so far off
As even to be near;
He is within: our spirit is
The home He holds most dear.

To think of Him as by our side
Is almost as untrue
As to remove His throne beyond
Those skies of starry blue.

So all the while I thought myself
Homeless, forlorn, and weary,
Missing my joy, I walked the earth,
Myself God's sanctuary.[2]

(4) *And He would be nearer, not to them only, but to all.*—Upon Wesley's tablet in Westminster Abbey may be read that proud word of his: "I look upon all the world as my parish." The qualifying words have no place on the tablet: "Thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare, unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation." Wesley's heart was as big as the world, but he could only be in one little corner of it at once; even

[1] C. G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 170. [2] F. W. Faber.

there he could speak only to those that were "willing to hear." What limitations are these! The Spirit's parish is the world. Every corner of it, every soul in it, owns His presence, and none can fence himself off from His approach or shut up the avenues by which conviction may come home.[1]

¶ Suppose Jesus were still in the Holy Land, at Jerusalem. Every ship that started for the East would be crowded with Christian pilgrims. Every train flying through Europe would be thronged with people going to see Jesus. Every mail-bag would be full of letters from those in difficulty and trial, and gifts of homage to manifest men's gratitude and love. You yourself, let us say, are in one of those ships. The port, when you arrive after the long voyage, is blocked with vessels of every flag. With much difficulty you land, and join one of the long trains starting for Jerusalem. Far as the eye can reach, the caravans move over the desert in an endless stream. You do not mind the scorching sun, the choking dust, the elbowing crowds, the burning sands. You are in the Holy Land, and you will see Jesus! Yonder, at last, in the far distance, are the glittering spires of the Holy Hill, above all the burnished Temple dome beneath which He sits. But what is that dark seething mass stretching for leagues and leagues between you and the Holy City? They have come from the north and from the south, and from the east and from the west, as you have, to look upon their Lord. They wish

> That His hands might be placed on their head;
> That His arms might be thrown around them.

But it cannot be. You have come to see Jesus, but you will not see Him. They have been there weeks, months, years, and have not seen Him. They are a yard or two nearer, and that is all. The thing is impossible. It is an anti-climax, an absurdity. It would be a social outrage; it would be a physical impossibility.[2]

(5) But again, it was expedient that He should go away *in order that they might be weaned from thoughts of earthly greatness.* —For Christ in heaven is and must be infinitely greater to the soul and heart of men than even He could be, seen by us with our bodily eyes on earth, living with us, and belonging to this earthly state of things which is for the present life—infinitely greater even than if He had been with us in the glorified body which

[1] J. Telford, *The Story of the Upper Room*, 184.
[2] H. Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 66.

He had after His resurrection, and in which He appeared and conversed with His disciples during the forty days before He ascended. It is because His Kingdom is not of this world—it is because He came to open and draw up men's hearts to what is infinitely above this world, and anything that ever belonged to it —it is because He came to teach, and to give them what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," of the good things "which God hath prepared for them that love him"—it was for this that, having shown Himself in the world, He did not stay in it. If He had stayed in it, our thoughts would have been towards Him, as still belonging to this world. We see how difficult it was to wean the thoughts of His own disciples from hopes and expectations of earthly greatness. "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" was their question when He had risen. How much more difficult it would have been if He had still continued with them, in human form, even though glorified! How could that lifting up of their minds to what was spiritual and eternal have been accomplished? How could they have been taught those great lessons of inner and spiritual religion, if the great Object of their faith was still visibly present with them, and as one of them? How could they have been made to feel as they did, that the Kingdom of God was within them, that man has to deal and commune with his God in the secret reality and truth of his heart and spirit—how could they have been made to unlearn all that was outward and visible in their religious thoughts, and have had the eyes of their understanding opened to eternal truths, and to a religion that was all of heaven and in heaven—if they still could find, and see, and hear on earth the form and voice of the greatest of their teachers?

¶ Many of us must recall the parable of an Alpine sunset. We gaze on the vast bare rocks and snow-slopes transfigured in a flood of burning light. In a moment there falls over them an ashy paleness as of death, cold and chilling. While we strive to measure our loss a deepening flush spreads slowly over the mountain sides, pure and calm and tender, and we know that the glory which has passed away is not lost even when it fades again from our sight. So it is with the noblest revelations which God makes to us. They fill us at first with their splendid beauty. Then for a time we find ourselves, as it were, left desolate while we face the sadnesses of an unintelligible world. But as we gaze

the truth comes back with a softer and more spiritual grace to be the spring of perpetual benediction.[1]

(6) *He went away that henceforth we may walk by faith, not by sight.*—In that one word "faith" we get at the root of the whole matter. If His Presence were not unseen, if we had certainty as to action and a fixed rule with no possibility of deviation, faith would not, it could not, even exist on its higher side, for faith is realization of things hoped for and insight into things invisible: it sees what is out of sight as though it were here—it sees Him in His invisible Presence, and it brings a far greater blessing than sight: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

¶ Faith is the one characteristic which raises man above the animal, above the natural—without which he cannot "please God" or be of any use to men. It sees in darkness, it believes without evidence, it is certain of the impossible, it is the highest reflection of Divine power within men. Faith as a moral faculty puts you face to face with the treasures of the universe; and where others see nothing, you see everything; where others see only bands of Syrians, you see the angels of God; where others see a blind force, you see the workings of a right loving Will, overruling all things. And you are rich for the sight; you grow, you increase, you become more and more conscious of the possibilities of your own life and of the universe, and you grow into the possibilities which you see. But without faith, you grovel through a purblind, naked, starved, diseased existence, seeing emptiness everywhere, because you are so empty; seeing darkness in every noble deed, because you are so dark; seeing all things dead or dying, because you have no life in you, with no soul for greatness in man or in the history of your race, with no enthusiasm, no stirring within you at great and enthralling sights, but dull, barren, poor, weak, and that because you have no faith, no insight, and therefore no goodness.[2]

(7) Last of all, *He must go that the Spirit may come.*—And the Spirit could not come until Christ was glorified. In a comment upon our Lord's words about the fountains of "living water," which were to spring up in those who believed on Him, St. John says: "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because

[1] B. F. Westcott, *Lessons from Work*, 110.
[2] R. Eyton, *The True Life*, 67.

Jesus was not yet glorified"; and this comment is but a brief and explicit statement of a truth which is wrought into the very substance of the New Testament. That a new and higher form of spiritual life has appeared in Christian times than appeared in the times before our Lord, is certain. This life is attributed to the "coming" of the Holy Spirit. Can we discover why it is that the Spirit did not — could not — come, till Christ was "glorified"?

What is meant by our Lord being "glorified"? It means infinitely more than we can know; but at least it means this, that when our Lord returned to the Father, His human nature, in all its capacities and powers, was wonderfully expanded and exalted. Even while He was on earth His human life, as it was gradually developed and as it rose, through righteousness and patient suffering, to a higher and still higher perfection, was more and more completely penetrated with the Divine life of the Eternal Word. It still remained human; but, in it and through it, that "eternal life, which was with the Father, was manifested" to men. When He returned to the Father He did not cease to be man, but it would appear that His human life was wholly transfigured by the life of the Eternal Son, who was in the beginning with God and who was God.

¶ "It is expedient for you that I go away." Yes! we understand Him now. It is expedient that perfect humanity should thus be associated on the Throne of Heaven with the Infinite and the Eternal. If we are to give our hearts and wills to the Author and End of our existence, if Christian worship is to be not a coldly calculated compliment, but the outcome of a pure and soul-consuming passion, it is well that on the heights of heaven there should throb to all eternity a human heart—the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and that in the adoration which we pay Him we should know that we are expending the inmost resources of our natures at the feet of the One Being who has upon them the claim, if I may dare speak thus, of relationship as well as the claim of Deity. And thus in the worship of the Church, inspired on the one hand by an awful sense of the inaccessible majesty of God, and on the other by a trustful, tender passion which has its roots in the consciousness of a human fellowship with its awful Object, we find that which we find nowhere else on earth, and understand the words, "It is expedient for you that I go away."[1]

[1] H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, 336.

II.

The Coming of the Spirit.

Christ's going away was a provision for the future life. The absent Lord prepares a place there; the absent Object of faith educates the souls of the faithful to possess and enjoy it. But He provides for the life that now is. And His going away has to do with the present as much as with the life to come.

¶ One day when Jesus was in Peræa, a message came to Him that a very dear friend was sick. He lived in a distant village with his two sisters. They were greatly concerned about their brother's illness, and had sent in haste for Jesus. Now Jesus loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus their brother; but He was so situated at the time that He could not go. Perhaps He was too busy, perhaps He had other similar cases on hand; at all events, He could not go. When He went ultimately, it was too late. Hour after hour the sisters waited for Him. They could not believe He would not come; but the slow hours dragged themselves along by the dying man's couch, and he was dead and laid in the grave before Jesus arrived. You can imagine one of His thoughts, at least, as He stands and weeps by that grave with the inconsolable sisters,—"It is expedient that I go away. I should have been present at his death-bed scene if I had been away. I will depart and send the Comforter. There will be no summons of sorrow which He will not be able to answer. He will abide with men for ever. Everywhere He will come and go. He will be like the noiseless invisible wind, blowing all over the world wheresoever He listeth."[1]

1. The Spirit comes to continue Christ's ministry. The spiritual and distinctive ministry of the Holy Spirit follows the personal and Messianic ministry of the Christ. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are represented as conditioned upon the mediatorial work of the Christ. The Father purposes human redemption; the Son, by His atoning work, enables the righteous forgiveness of sin; and the Holy Spirit quickens spiritual life in forgiven men. The dispensation of the Father is followed by the dispensation of the Son; the dispensation of the Son by the dispensation of the Spirit.

[1] H. Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 72.

¶ The development of Christian experience, throughout all its changes, depends upon one unchanging personality. The Christ was to depart and the Comforter was to come, but the Comforter was to come as the messenger of the departing Christ. "If I go, I will send him unto you." There is no real brokenness in spiritual experience, in spite of what seem to us to be variations in its intensity or gaps in its record or occasional hours in which its life has lain in trance: behind it all has been and is to-day the power of the ever-living Christ. And this is the one great fact to which we must come back for security when our faith in Divine things is like to fail because we do not always see them with the same clear sight, and because they do not always thrill us with the same sweeping currents of joy—the fact that in whatever way holy things may touch us, it is Christ who brings them near, that whether they rouse a passion of holy rapture or draw out the quieter sensibilities lying hidden in our souls, it is Christ who orders their attendance upon us; that the outward spiritual ministries which excited the earliest stirrings of our faith, and the inward spiritual ministries by which we live to-day, have all been under Christ's control.[1]

2. The outward is changed to the inward. The Divine presence and teaching, and redeeming death of the Son were, so to speak, outside the man. Hence but little spiritual result followed Christ's personal ministry. He made but few disciples: "the Spirit was not yet given." Though He had done so many mighty works among them, yet did they not believe on Him. He promised, therefore, a still greater ministry than His own—a life-giving Power, who should quicken religious feeling within them, who should be, not an outward teacher, but an indwelling life-giver and sanctifier; and who should do His mighty spiritual work by taking the things of Christ and showing them unto us. Henceforth the Spirit would work in the hearts of men, not through the partial and imperfect truths of the old Jewish dispensation, but through the new and transcendent truths of Christ's incarnation and atonement.

The Day of Pentecost was simply the special manifestation, the formal inauguration of the dispensation of the Spirit. Henceforth, men were to be taught by purely spiritual ideas, and were to be made holy by purely spiritual forces. Miracles and prophesyings were to cease; the personal teaching and example

[1] H. W. Clark, *Laws of the Inner Kingdom*, 68.

of Christ were withdrawn; the atoning death was accomplished and Christ ascended to heaven. The revelation of God's truth and love was completed; and henceforth only spiritual forces were to work in the hearts of men.

¶ At first the inner life depends largely upon stimulus from without: the soul lies to a great extent inactive unless some external influence rouses it from its sleep; and, in the early days of our Christian discipleship, it is often the more public, the more outward, channels through which Christ's influence comes down that best satisfy our heart's need and most perfectly fill our craving for consciousness of the Master's presence. We go back in memory to the far-off time and the distant land which He blest by His benignant life, and we seem to walk with Him then and there, to hear the word of healing or forgiveness coming upon the sufferers who saw His human face; we enter into converse about Him with those who are like-minded, and in that friendly interchange of thought we find our joy quickened and our peace made deeper; and by many outward helps such as these the things of Christ are made more real to us and set into contact with our inner life. But slowly the soul reaches its own vision; the necessity for any outward aids to realize the presence of Christ grows less, because in the new strength of the inward sight we behold Him companying with us; and while the external means which formerly assisted us to a consciousness of His nearness are still there and still to a certain extent useful in their place, yet we no longer depend upon them to wake our spiritual apprehension or to raise our Christian emotion to its needed heat. The old things go away, and it is expedient that they should: the ministry of the Divine works directly upon our deepest lives, without the interposition of any intermediate agencies. We look for our Christ, not to any memories of far-off years, not to any words that others speak, not to any light that breaks upon others' faces like the out-shining of His glory—not, at any rate, primarily to these things; we find and touch Christ by the immediate outreaching of the soul.[1]

3. The work of the Spirit is not only to continue Christ's work; it is to commend Christ.

(1) The disciples did not know Christ till the Spirit came. It is a law of our nature that we lose in the breadth and accuracy of our knowledge by too close and continuous physical proximity to the object of knowledge. This is true as regards both things

[1] H. W. Clark, *Laws of the Inner Kingdom*, 64.

and persons. We cannot see the beauties of a great painting by standing close to the canvas. The tourist enjoys best the sights which he has seen during his tour as memory and imagination recall them after he has returned home. We learn to appraise our greatest blessings at their proper value—such blessings as health, youth, gospel privileges—only after they have been withdrawn from us.

Now, in like manner, the Lord's absence has brought to His Church the gain of better knowledge of Him. The Apostles knew their Master better, and appreciated Him more, after His departure than they had done during all the time that He went in and out among them. As a vehicle of Christian teaching His presence with them did not after all accomplish very much. For they saw the Son of Man in His personal poverty, in His human weakness, in His extreme humiliation. It was too hard for them to realize that that wayworn and weary Man, who clung to them for sympathy even when He inspired and attracted, was indeed the Mighty God. So long as He was among them, they really did not know Him. They could not understand the simplest truths about Himself which He taught them—for instance, the fact that He was to die as a martyr, and to rise again from the dead.

But how different these same men became after their Master had gone away! The Comforter came to them at Pentecost, and all their dulness passed from them. The scales fell from their eyes; or rather, they became full of eyes within. Their language now is: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." They knew Him not now in the carnal aspect of Him, but in His new life-giving power.

¶ You know that the mother always loves best the child that is dead. It is not because the child that is dead was better than all the children that are living, but because death brings the loved ones nearer to us than life ever brings them. You will never know your wife till she has gone from you. We never realize the meaning of Good-morning until we have said Good-bye. The hand-shake and the sad farewell bring hearts nearest to one another. So the world never knows its great men while they live. We have many illustrations of this. While he lived, Abraham Lincoln was the most hated man of all Americans throughout the South. The moment that man who counted himself Abraham Lincoln's enemy, but proved unwittingly a

friend to his memory, shot him, that moment the South began to recover its reason, and to-day the martyred President is honoured South as well as North.[1]

(2) They did not understand His *teaching* till the Spirit came and interpreted it. When He went away, the blessing that He promised as more than compensation for His presence was that they should enter into the significance of His past companionship with them, that the Spirit should bring to their remembrance whatsoever He had said unto them, and, in the light of His death and exaltation, become the Interpreter of all the deeper things which in their natural intercourse with Him their eyes had not been open to perceive.

When the Comforter came, all things were brought back to their remembrance. Old truths and perplexing memories received their true solution. Words they had mused upon in doubt were interpreted; sayings they had thought already clear were seen to have profounder meanings; a fountain of light sprang up within them, an illumination cast from an unseen teacher unfolded to their consciousness the deep things of God and of His Christ. Their very faculties were enlarged: they were no longer pent up by narrow senses and by the succession of time, but were lifted into a light where all things are boundless and eternal. A new power of insight was implanted in their spiritual being, and a new world rose up before it; for the Spirit of truth dwelt in them, and the world unseen was revealed.

¶ The great truths are never apprehended while the great teachers of those truths are living to expound them. The death of a great teacher deepens and disseminates the knowledge of the truth. It was so with the death of Christ. It has been so with the death of every great teacher since Christ died. For the truth is always greater than the individual expounder of it—deeper, higher, broader, larger. The death of the teacher deepens the knowledge of the truth. While he lives, multitudes of men are attracted by his own personality, by the peculiar form in which he puts the truth, by the amplitude of illustration, by the vehemence of utterance and strength of conviction, by qualities that are in himself; and those qualities, while in one sense they interpret, in another sense they obscure, the truth. No man realizes this like the man who is trying to interpret a great truth

[1] L. Abbott, *Signs of Promise*, 44.

to mankind. In him it dwells; in him it burns as a fire. He seeks to fling open the doors of his heart that men may look in and see, not him, but the truth that is the power within himself; and he is perplexed and humiliated and distraught and sorrow-stricken that men will not see the truth, but will look only at him, at his words, at his figures, at his illustrations, at his genius, at his gestures. But when he has gone, and these outward interpretations and semblances begin to fade from their memory, that which they really obscured, but which they seemed to interpret,—or for the time did really though imperfectly and obscurely interpret,—that begins to dawn upon them. The truth grows larger, deeper, in their apprehension; they look beyond the man to feel that the utterance was made eloquent by the truth within him; that the truth was the real inspiration.[1]

4. The Spirit comes to make us able to witness for Christ. The work of the Spirit is wrought through Christians. His work is our work; and because He works through us, and not in ourselves only, our work becomes possible. We are called upon to make known in act and word that men are made for fellowship with God; that even in the tumults and disorders of life the Divine law can be fulfilled and alone brings rest; that Christ and not the Evil One is the rightful sovereign of all. This is the interpretation of Christ's life which the Spirit gives through the Church, through us.

¶ Is not the trouble with most of our witnessing for God that it is inconstant and inconsistent, lacking unity as well as continuity? What is our hope but the indwelling Spirit of Christ, to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, to inspire every word and deed by His love? Then will "broken lights" blend in steady shining, the fractional be summed up in the integral, and life, unified and beautified by the central Christ, radiate God's glory, and shine with Divine effulgence.[2]

[1] L. Abbott, *Signs of Promise*, 45.

[2] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 9.

The Spirit and the World.

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THE SPIRIT AND THE WORLD.

And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.—John xvi. 8-11.

1. SIN, righteousness, judgment, are three of the greatest terms in the vocabulary of men. And they stand for tremendous spiritual realities by which our state is conditioned and our destiny determined. The words that stand for these realities are to be found in all languages; and in some languages (and particularly in the language of the New Testament) the terms are characterized by intellectual precision and beauty. Yet in the time of Christ they had come to stand for lost ideas. The terms were there, but the meaning had faded out of them. They had been lowered and belittled; they had suffered deterioration generation after generation; they had received into themselves foreign and alien significations by which their meaning had been still more obscured and perverted; and though they were still in the speech they failed to convey to the understanding and to the conscience of men the tremendous realities for which they stood. And nothing could have arrested the decline of these terms; nothing could have prevented their gravitating into the region of dead speech, speech from which true vitality had gone; nothing could have prevented that consummated deterioration but the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the mission of the Holy Ghost. It was by Christ that sin was reproved and righteousness revealed and judgment assured; and it is by the Holy Ghost that sin, righteousness, and judgment are continually revealed, attested, and brought home to the hearts and consciences of men.

2. Did Jesus Christ, then, come to give the world a new thought about sin? Did He come to reveal to men a different

pattern of righteousness? Did He come to say a new thing concerning judgment? No. It is remarkable that Jesus said very little that was new. Every truth He uttered we may find in the Old Covenant; but He picked up the truths that were partially seen and imperfectly understood, shrouded in the mists and mysteries of man's finite conception. He put them into simplicity, into plainness, into proportion and perspective, and He gave us a fair and perfect temple of truth. This is what He has done for the race concerning these three great thoughts which break in upon a man when he is awakening to spiritual being. The message of Christianity to the world is this: that sin has now a new centre, righteousness a new possibility, and that judgment is wholly altered by this new sin centre and this new possibility of righteousness: "of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father."

3. Let us take the three together before we examine them singly.

(1) To know what sin is we must know what righteousness is. To be quite sure of righteousness, we must be sure how it will stand at the end in relation to sin. It must stand over sin, and judge it, and destroy it. Judgment is not primarily punishment, nor is it a mere declaration of the state of the law, but it is the actual final establishment of righteousness upon the wreck of sin. The stroke of sin upon sanctity can only evoke judgment, which by the grace of Christ becomes salvation. In the world it is sin that judges righteousness, and does with it what it will. In the Kingdom of God it is righteousness that judges sin, and does with it the will of God—it destroys it.

(2) With the awakening of the spiritual consciousness in man there always comes a threefold conviction, conviction concerning sin, concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment. When the earliest consciousness of a man's spiritual nature breaks in upon him, the three facts that he faces, immediately and necessarily, are those referred to in the text,—sin, righteousness, judgment,—and the consciousness concerning each is a double consciousness of the spiritual realm that lies beyond, and of his own personal relationship to that spiritual realm.

¶ The words suggest to us the three moral ingredients of healthy public opinion in a Christian country. Every society, every nation, has its public opinion, its common stock of hopes, fears, prejudices, likings, enthusiasms, repugnances, tastes, points of view,—the common stock to which all contribute something, and by which in turn all are influenced. The old-world cities, each of them had a public opinion of its own—Rome, and Athens, and Jerusalem; and now too, wherever men meet and exchange thoughts, and know themselves to be bound to each other by the ties of race, or of common interests, or of historical associations, there grows up inevitably a common fund of thoughts and phrases which may be barbarous or enlightened, as the case may be, but which is always influential. Like the smoke and vapours which hang visibly in the air over every large centre of human life, to which every hearth contributes something, and by which every window is more or less shaded, so in the world of public thought and feeling there is a like common product of all the minds which think and feel at all, which in turn influences more or less all the contributors to it. And what I am now insisting upon is, that this inevitable product and accompaniment of human society,—public opinion,—if it is Christian, must contain a recognition of the three solemn facts—sin, righteousness, judgment.[1]

I.

Sin.

"He will convict the world in respect of sin." Now the world as such knows nothing of sin; and yet it is the root of all that from which it suffers. It is the root, it is the explanation of all the numberless forms of damage and deterioration that human character suffers. Sin is the source whence all the ills of human life and human society arise. Many terms are needed to describe the manifestations or results of sin. The world is well aware, for example, of defects of human character, and it can describe them in detail. It says of a man that he is unjust, or that he is cruel, or proud, or sensual, or covetous; and yet these are but minor terms to specify this or the other manifestation of a deep, central, fundamental evil of the world, the very existence of which, as a fundamental evil, the world has never understood. It is very

[1] H. P. Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, 351.

touching and very pathetic to observe that while the world had large, immense experience of sin it had little or no sense of sin.

¶ Mr. Gladstone once spoke of the absence of the sense of sin as perhaps the greatest peril of modern society. And I think it is not too much to say that, apart from the person of Christ and the mission of the Holy Ghost, we not only have no guarantee that the sense of sin would be maintained, but we have every reason to believe that it would again die out; and that while men would be irritated and angered by this and the other evil and wrong in society, their conscience concerning the mystic and root evil would as before show itself utterly inadequate to the exigencies of the case.[1]

1. The world must be convinced of sin. Let us take due account of the fact that conviction of sin is a profoundly intelligent matter, and worthy, in that view, to engage the counsel of God in the gift of His Son. If we have any such thought as that what is called conviction of sin is only a blind torment, or crisis of excited fear, technically prescribed as a matter to be suffered in the way of conversion, we cannot too soon rid ourselves of the mistake. It is neither more nor less than a due self-knowledge —not a knowledge of the mere understanding, or such as may be obtained by philosophic reflection, but a more certain, more immediate sensing of ourselves by consciousness; just the same as that which the criminal has, when he hides himself away from justice; fleeing, it may be, when no man pursueth. He has a most invincible, most real, knowledge of himself; not by any cognitive process of reflection, but by his immediate consciousness —he is consciously a guilty man. All men are consciously guilty before God, and the standards of God, in the same manner. They do not approve, but invariably condemn themselves; only they become so used to the fact that they make nothing of it, but take it even as the normal condition of their life.

(1) *It is not easy to convince men of sin.*—Confucius is said to have once exclaimed, in an outburst of despondency, "It is all over! I have not yet seen one who could perceive his fault and inwardly accuse himself." Confucius is not alone in that verdict upon human nature. The lament is suggestive. It implies the enormous difficulty of bringing an average man to admit his fault.

[1] F. W. Macdonald.

It implies also that, with his many virtues and excellences, Confucius did not achieve a character of such ideal perfection that his contemporaries felt themselves smitten with shame by his transcendent example. And it implies that the common conscience needs to be reinforced with supernatural influence and vitality before it can assert itself and compel confession and repentance.

¶ A friend told me this tale, a few years ago, as we paced together the deck of a steamship on the Mediterranean, and talked of the things unseen. The chaplain of a prison, intimate with the narrator, had to deal with a man condemned to death. He found the man anxious, as he well might be—nay, he seemed more than anxious; convicted, spiritually alarmed. The chaplain's instructions all bore upon the power of the Redeemer to save to the uttermost; and it seemed as if the message were received, and the man were a believer. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, the chaplain had come to think that there was ground for appeal from the death-sentence; he placed the matter before the proper authorities, and with success. On his next visit, very cautiously and by way of mere suggestions and surmises, he led the apparently resigned criminal towards the possibility of a commutation. What would he say, how would his repentance stand, if his life were granted him? The answer soon came. Instantly the prisoner divined the position; asked a few decisive questions; then *threw his Bible across the cell*, and, civilly thanking the chaplain for his attentions, told him that he had no further need of him, nor of his Book.[1]

(2) *Conviction of sin is necessary.*—"He shall convince the world of sin." The first outstanding characteristic of the whole Gospel message is the new gravity which it attaches to the fact of sin, the deeper meaning which it gives to the word, and the larger scope which it shows its blighting influences to have had in humanity. Apart from the conviction of sin by the Spirit using the Word proclaimed by disciples, the world has scarcely a notion of what sin is, its inwardness, its universality, the awfulness of it as a fact affecting man's whole being and all his relations to God. All these conceptions are especially the product of Christian truth. Without it, what does the world know about the poison of sin? And what does it care about the poison until

[1] Bishop Moule, *From Sunday to Sunday*, 190.

the conviction has been driven home to the reluctant consciousness of mankind by the Spirit wielding the Word? This conviction comes first in the Divine order.

¶ I do not say that the process of turning a man of the world into a member of Christ's Church always begins, as a matter of fact, with the conviction of sin. I believe it most generally does; but without insisting upon a pedantic adherence to a sequence, and without saying a word about the depth and intensity of such a conviction, I am ready to assert that a Christianity which is not based upon the conviction of sin is an impotent Christianity, and will be of very little use to the men who profess it, and have no power to propagate itself in the world.[1]

¶ I remember seeing, in my early childhood, the dear and beautiful subject of the following incident, the aged widow of a farmer in my father's parish. My mother took me to visit Mrs. E. one day in her farm-kitchen. It was, I think, in 1849. I still *see* the brightness, the sweet radiance, of that venerable face; it shone, as I now know, with Jesus Christ. At the age of about eighty-one, after a life of blameless kindliness, so that to say she had "never done harm to any one" was from her no unmeaning utterance, she was, through the Holy Scriptures, convinced of sin. "I have lived eighty years in the world," was her cry, "and never done anything for God." Deep went the Divine work in the still active nature, and long was the spiritual darkness. Then "the word of the Cross" found its own way in her soul, and "believing, she rejoiced with joy unspeakable." Three or four years of life were yet given her. They were illuminated by faith, hope, and love in a wonderful degree. To every visitor she bore witness of her Lord. Nights, wakeful with pain, were spent in living over the beloved scenes of His earthly ministry: "I was at the well of Samaria last night"; "Ah, I was all last night upon Mount Calvary." In extreme suffering an opiate was offered, and she declined it; for "when I lose the pain I lose the thought of my Saviour too." At last she slept in the Lord, gently murmuring, almost singing, "Rock of Ages," with her latest breath.[2]

2. The sin of which the world has to be convinced is the sin of unbelief. The Spirit convinces men of sin "because they believe not on me." He shows them that unbelief is sin. It is the root of sin. The greatest sin that men can commit is the rejection of Christ. The message of the Gospel is so framed that no apology

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Holy of Holies*, 274.
[2] Bishop Moule, *From Sunday to Sunday*, 191.

shall be able to extenuate the act of refusing it. Men shall never say that it is too hard to be understood; for its sublimest revelations have in them a simplicity that makes them intelligible even to illiterate persons, and appreciated by children. They shall never say that the doctrines of the Gospel are unreasonable; for the light which it throws upon intricate social problems, the complete and unanswerable replies that it gives to questions unsettled before, the plain and sober goodness and the eminent reasonableness that lie at the root of its laws, all of which qualities men can understand, shall prove to them that they ought to accept those supernatural features which are beyond their comprehension. They shall never say that its purpose is unnecessary; their own hearts and life shall tell them, and the condition of the world around shall cry aloud in their ears, that sin is an unconquerable power; that the sources of crime, disorder, and social debility are as prevailing as they are pestilent; that no remedy of human preparation has ever succeeded in effectually checking them; and that it is the business of all men, unitedly, personally, and constantly, to endeavour to remove them; when, therefore, the Gospel of Jesus presents itself to a despairing world as another hope of deliverance, a last hope, men shall never be able to object to it as unnecessary. Finally, they shall not decline to accept it because it can point to no witnesses or examples of its power. These shall always be at hand, comprising a mighty and ever-accumulating argument, a vast "cloud of witnesses," spreading themselves over the world, not like distinct and eccentric meteors to dazzle and perplex, but like a dawn coming from that quarter of the horizon where men expect the day—a mild, genial, useful glory, the luminous ordinance of God Himself. So convincing did the Holy Ghost make the Gospel, and does still make it, defending it by every proof that can tell upon the convictions of men. Wherever Christ is preached, hearers shall be condemned because they believe not on Him. Possibly they may not be convinced, certainly they shall be convicted.

¶ Men say they understand that cruelty, treachery, and lust bring their punishment sooner or later. But what they cannot understand is that the mere fact of refusing to believe is the sin of sins. A typical writer of the period says: "Science is but a new way of applying the mind to everything. It has affirmed the right

and duty of investigation and verification. It has set up a new kind of intellectual morality, which has substituted the duty of inquiry for the duty of belief. The immediate result has been in England a sudden and amazing diminution of intolerance, a wonderful and wholly unexpected increase of mental freedom." In other words, conscience may speak about other sin, but in the case of unbelief the thing forbidden does not appear to be in its own nature wrong, and "Don Worm" refuses to bite.

The appeal must be to what is elemental in human nature and experience. Content to be judged by that appeal, we maintain that the conscience bears witness that unbelief is the sin of sins. If ever conscience speaks out it is when this sin is committed on the levels of human life. As Bunyan puts it, they shut up Mr. Conscience, they blind his windows, they barricade his door, they cut the rope of the great bell on the housetop which he is wont to ring, that the town of Mansoul may not be disturbed. But sometimes Mr. Conscience escapes and rings his bell. For the sin of all sins to which the conscience bears witness is the sin of mistrusting and despising love. There is so little love in this world, and there is such a hard need of it. Multitudes have to go through life famished for lack of love. Even the most favoured have very few really to love them. If we have no love, human or Divine, then indeed life ceases to be worth living. "I would rather," said one, "be condemned to be led out and hung if I knew one human soul would love me for a week beforehand and honour me afterwards, than live half a century and be nothing to any living creature."[1]

3. Unbelief is always seen at last to be want of belief in Christ. The Spirit, says Jesus, will convince the world of sin, "in that they believe not on me." He will show the real nature of sin. "How shall we work the works of God?" it was asked; and it was answered by Christ, "This is the work of God, to believe on him whom he hath sent." Sin is not measured by a law, or a nation, or a society of any kind, but by a Person. The righteousness of God was not in a requirement, system, book, or Church, but in a Person, and sin is defined by relation to Him. He came to reveal not only God but sin. The essence of sin is exposed by the touchstone of His presence, by our attitude to Him. He makes explicit what the sinfulness of sin is; He even aggravates it. He rouses the worst as well as the best of human nature. There is nothing that human nature hates like holy

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 21.

God. All the world's sin receives its sharpest expression when in contact with Christ; when, in face of His moral beauty, goodness, power, and claim, He is first ignored, then discarded, denounced, called the agent of Beelzebub, and hustled out of the world in the name of God.

¶ What is the belief that saves? We are asking the question in order that we may discover the unbelief that is sin. The belief that saves is that conviction which produces the abandonment of the whole life to the King. When I have believed that He is able to do all that I want, and I have ceded to Him all my life, then have I believed. A man does not believe the truth he holds, to borrow a very popular phrase, but he believes the truth that holds him. You have never yet believed on Jesus until you have abandoned your whole life to His Lordship, and trusted your soul to His Saviourhood, and never a man so believed but He "broke the power of cancelled sin, and set the prisoner free."[1]

4. What means does the Holy Spirit use in order to convince the world of the sin of unbelief in Christ?

(1) *He puts an environment of new ideals before the mind.*—He testifies of Christ, and in so doing makes us see how in His humanity all Divine excellences have come down into the midst of men and made themselves a new law to the conscience. We are not, after all, in a universe dominated by avarice, envy, falsehood, animalism, but by unselfishness, sanctity, truth, spiritual principle.

¶ Some little time ago I was passing through a country lane, and saw a flock of sheep feeding on the hillside. They seemed to be milk-white, justifying the Scriptural metaphor, "He scattereth the hoarfrost like wool," and fit to be welcomed as pets into a drawing-room. In comparison with the green pastures in which they were feeding, their fleeces seemed bleached into spotlessness. Not long after, a snowstorm came, and I had occasion to pass by the same field. But the sheep did not seem to be the same creatures at all. The background had changed as if by magic, and they were in a new world, the conditions of which served to bring out their griminess. They looked speckled, dingy, piebald, and anything but clean in comparison with the glittering snows in which they were nestling. The collier, rising out of the pit into the sunshine after a night of toil, scarcely looked grimier than those spotless sheep of yesterday. The stainless and dazzling

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

snow served to bring into view all the dust from the roadside, all the bits of blackthorn from the hedges, all the carbon flakes ejected from the chimneys of the adjoining town that had been caught in their fleeces.[1]

(2) *The Spirit comes with a new atmosphere of sympathy and graciousness*, unlike that which exists in the world and provokes to ingenuous self-justification. He who comes under this ministry feels almost instinctively His right to search the heart and bring every delinquency before a Divine tribunal. It is useless to attempt concealment, for the Spirit knows us more thoroughly than we know ourselves, and can constrain the most reluctant natures into a consciousness of their own evil. Indeed, the desire to cloak or dissemble silently disappears, for we instinctively recognize that His revelations, however unwelcome, are benevolent in motive. Whilst the full revelation of Divine love cannot be vouchsafed at this stage, we see at once that the attempt to convict us is not that of some competitor who is trying to smite us down. He acts upon us, not like the angry storm which leads men to bar their doors and close their shutters, but like the soft south wind, which opens every labyrinth of the heart and life to the light. It is no treachery or ill-will or unrelenting antagonism that is bringing home to us the unwelcome facts of the past, but helping and healing beneficence. In the most vivid revival of the half-forgotten sin there is no malicious exaggeration. His enforcement of the fact of our guilt is recognized as a gentle and tender effort to teach us those forgotten realities of law with which we have to reckon, and to put us into a better position for dealing with them. Whatever pain He inflicts, it is inseparable from the cure of a dire disease, and from the process of arousing faculties marked hitherto by ominous numbness and dormancy. He brings the hard rebel world, ever on the alert to justify itself, into an atmosphere that is something more wonderful than even the essence of compassionate fatherhood.

(3) *A new power of moral discernment is aroused.*—In what is called Christendom, there has been a manifest uplifting of the moral standards, and a correspondent quickening of the moral sensibilities, both of individual men and of whole races and peoples. In the people of the old dispensation and of the great

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Privilege*, 53.

pagan empires long ago converted to the Cross, moral ideas have now taken the place, to a great extent, of force; the coarse blank apathy of sin is broken up; the sense of duty is more piercing; and it is even as if a new conscience had been given respecting the soul in its relations to God. It is as if men had seen their state of sin glassed before them, and made visible in the rejection of Christ and His cross. Jews and pagans had before been made conscious at times of particular sins; we are made conscious, in a deeper and more appalling way, of the state of sin itself, the damning evil that infects our humanity at the root—that which rejected and crucified the Son of God, and is in fact the general madness and lost condition of the race.

¶ Immediately after the departure of Christ from the world, that is, on the day of Pentecost, there broke out a new demonstration of sensibility to sin, such as was never before seen. In the days of the Law, men had their visitations of guilt and remorse, respecting this or that wrong act; but I do not recollect, even under the prophets, those great preachers of the Law and sharpest and most terrible sifters of transgression, a single instance where a soul is so broken or distressed by the conviction of its own bad state under sin as to ask what it must do to be saved—the very thing which many thousands did, on the day of Pentecost, and in the weeks that followed, and have been doing even till now.[1]

II.

Righteousness.

"He will convict the world in respect of righteousness." The Gospel of the Son of God is not the Gospel of forgiveness merely. It is also the Gospel of life and power, a great message, declaring that to the man who believes on Him, the living Lord, there comes new life-force, a new dynamic of virtue; and therefore the sin that ruins is the sin of unbelief. Merging into that first statement is necessarily the second statement of the text. "Of righteousness," said Jesus, "because I go to the Father." Who else could have uttered these words? If we can say that we shall go to the Father, our going is through the merit and for the sake of another, but none introduced the Man of Nazareth to the Father. He

[1] Horace Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, 115.

asked no mercy; when He ascended on high He did not appear in Heaven's court in virtue of what another had done, but stood unafraid in Heaven's light, in the perfect light of His victorious manhood. He says, "I go to the Father," and in His going to the Father He has vindicated the possibility of the perfection of righteousness as an ideal life. And yet He did infinitely more by going to the Father. He received that Spirit which, poured out, becomes the life-force for others.

1. *The Spirit convinces the world of the existence of righteousness.*—The world as a world has but dim and inadequate conceptions of what righteousness is. A Pharisee is its type, or a man that keeps a clean life in respect of great transgressions—a whited sepulchre of some sort or other. The world apart from Christ has but languid desires after even the poor righteousness that it understands, and the world apart from Christ is afflicted by a despairing scepticism as to the possibility of ever being righteous at all.

¶ Those who know this earth only can make nothing of righteousness. They try various definitions of it, such as equality of exchange or of condition and what is good for the greater number; but these accounts, besides failing to satisfy the idea of justice, carry no constraining authority to the individual conscience. In the New Testament age, whilst there was a strong tradition amongst the Romans in favour of orderly administration, thinking men were at a loss how to understand justice or righteousness in itself, and the general mind was not dominated by any clear conception of its nature or its authority. What was justice? What was a just man? Why was any one bound to be just? To such questions no answer was found. Our Lord says, the Spirit will bring the world to the knowledge of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more.[1]

2. *The Spirit convinces the world of the righteousness of Christ.*—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took on Him our flesh, and in the flesh condemned sin. Every thought, and word, and deed of His life was, in the highest sense, right. He lived amidst the ordinary surroundings of men, exposed to the same temptations, corruption, and weakness, a thoroughly Divine life, which could not fail to heighten the standard of the world. He was God manifest in the flesh. Of Him, alone, of all those born of woman, it could be said in the fullest meaning of the words: "He hath done all things

[1] J. Ll. Davies, *Spiritual Apprehension*, 47.

well." Here, then, was the world's need supplied by the living Model of a perfectly holy life. But the world was by no means willing to receive and act upon the heaven-sent Light which penetrated its darkness. Just as a person long accustomed to the foul atmosphere of a dirty, unhealthy room, will resent with indignation any attempt to let in a breath of purifying air, so the degraded human race arose with one accord to reject the example of righteousness God had sent into their midst. This was the condemnation that light had come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Jesus Christ never thought of Himself: their whole thoughts were centred on self. His heart was set on things above: theirs on the gratification of their own needs, desires, and pleasures. They were covetous and filled with worldliness: He had no earthly possessions, not even a place where to lay His head. They were proud and self-willed: He was meek and lowly, and His daily endeavour was to do His Father's will. So, because it was clear that one or other of these standards must be wrong, it seemed an easier plan for mankind, instead of reforming its own habits, to determine that the Lord Jesus was an impostor.

Accordingly, they banded themselves together and agreed that He was blaspheming God when He declared that He was the Divine Life—that He, the friend of publicans and sinners, was indeed the Son of the Most High, the heaven-sent Pattern of eternal righteousness. On this pretext they condemned Him to death, and nailed Him to the Cross; and then, when they had laid a great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, sealed it, and set a watch, they trusted His witness was silenced for ever. But God's voice is not so easily silenced as sinful men desire. Jesus Christ was content to be led as a lamb to the slaughter because it was part of the eternal counsel that His blood must thus be shed for the sins of the world; but He declared most clearly, alike to friend and to foe, that His life was the only one with which God was well pleased. He set forth also most emphatically the test to which His words were to be subjected: "If I rise from the dead on the third day, and after showing unmistakable proofs of having been nailed to the cross, I ascend into heaven, then you must acknowledge that My record is true. If I thus go to My Father and you see Me no more, then you will be compelled to admit that

I have spoken truth, that you have failed in convincing Me of sin, and that I am indeed the Holy One of God."

¶ The world that had slain Christ as unrighteous would own His righteousness when He had gone to the Father and they had seen Him no more. In all the literature of love and sorrow—and the two are never disjoined—we have this interpreted to us. It is in the withdrawal, in the departure to eternity, in the time of the lost vision that we know the righteousness we denied, or imperfectly recognized, when it was with us in its human dress. In Browning's great poem he tells us how the murderer and ruffian husband, Guido, whose cruelty and malignity to the pure and trustful Pompilia passed all bounds, discerned her at last when she was with God. The procession entered his cell to lead him away to death, and he called out in an agony of fear—

> Abate—Cardinal—Christ—Maria—God . . .
> Pompilia! Will you let them murder me?

Pompilia, the sweet child, saint, martyr, was, in the man's thought, exalted even above God in the power to save. In all the paths of life, even the highest, the same holds true. The background of death is needed to bring out the full meaning and force of life. The highest we have known may indeed shine upon us through the semi-opaque routine of daily duties. But we feel as if we had never known them when they go to the Father, and the thought clutches the heart that we shall see them no more. One illustration is in every reader's mind. Queen Victoria was loved and reverenced as perhaps no monarch ever was before her death, with a love and reverence that grew with time. But how infinitely the devotion of her people was enhanced when she went to the Father and they saw her no more! In what a new way the nation perceived how she had given them all her strength and tenderness through these long, brave, faithful, constant years![1]

3. *The Spirit convinces the world that only in Christ is righteousness to be found.*—There are three requisites which must be fulfilled before man, as a sinner, can feel the possibility of his righteousness. The sins of the past haunt and terrify him; they bind him with cords of fear and self-condemnation, which prevent his rising;—here, then, the sense of forgiveness is the first requisite. But the sense of sin awakens the sense of immortality, and clothes it with fear. He dare not look onward, for his sin has peopled the worlds of the future with terrors, and for his

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 208.

justification he needs a Deliverer who shall have explored the future worlds, and illuminated their mystery; here is the second requisite. But he needs yet more. It is not enough for the past to be forgiven, and the future brightened; he himself must possess the germ of a new, righteous, God-like life; he must be a new man, rising into that revealed immortality. These three necessities: the assurance of forgiveness of the past; the removal of the terrors of the future; the creation of a new manhood in the present, are all met by the truth that Christ has gone to the Father; and when that is revealed by the Comforter, we have the conviction of righteousness.

¶ Newman, in a very remarkable passage, says of the saints that their lingering imperfections surely make us love them more without leading us to reverence them less, and act as a relief to the discouragement and despondency which may come over those who in the midst of error and sin are striving to imitate them. That is to say, if their lives were beautiful before God we do not ask that they should be stainless, for even the stains show us that we, too, though we fall, may rise again. But let us ask how it would have been if any speck had fallen on the life of our Lord Jesus? How would it have been with us if He had spoken one rash word, if He had cherished in His mind one single unjust thought, if one arrow of the enemy had pierced His armour? If that had been, the prince of this world would be still in power, and all our hope were dead. But He kept innocency and took heed to the thing that was right from the beginning to the end. Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a Name which is above every name, even the saving Name. By His righteousness so dearly wrought out, we too may be made righteous. His righteousness is our beauty, our glorious dress, proof against the fires of the Last Day. We are redeemed by that voluntary substitution of the Innocent for the guilty with which the Father is well pleased.[1]

(1) "Because I go to my Father." What is the meaning of "because"? It is this: If He had not been right in the claims He made He could not have gone to the Father when He died. If He went to the Father, if His Spirit convinced men that He was there and was acting from there, then He had been right in the claims He made about His relations to the Father and about His judgment of the world, and especially of Israel's

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 214.

sin. The apostolic fact of His resurrection was proof that Israel's God confirmed the claim of Christ, and gave judgment for Him against Israel. That was what settled the matter for St. Paul. As soon as He was convinced that God had raised up Christ and set Him at His right hand in glory, the whole fabric of his Judaism gave way. God would not raise a fanatic, impostor, or blasphemer. The Spirit convinced St. Paul that Jesus was the Holy One and the Just—nay, the very Righteousness of God; that the sin of sins lay with the people who thought themselves the best of the good.

(2) "And ye see me no more." We are often like His disciples among these deep mysteries—we cannot tell what He saith. And yet the Holy Spirit makes the meaning as clear as it can be made to mortals. We are to lose the earthly vision that we may gain the heavenly. We are to lose the vision after the flesh that we may win the vision after the Spirit. Even in the highways of earthly love this may be understood—the more excellent glory of the spiritual love. "Love," says our greatest poet, "is not time's fool," and perhaps the finest love-line in our language was written by another poet, hardly less great, to his wife:—

To you who are seventy-seven.

III.

Judgment.

"He will convict the world in respect of judgment." We miss the note of judgment in our day. Our convictions do not start from a sense that we are convicted. We want to be convinced by evidence where we should be convicted by the Spirit. This is an element that has dropped out of our view of the Cross, and therefore out of much Christian life; Christ crucified, we think, took the pain of sin but not its penalty, its sorrow but not its curse. We have of late done justice to the idea of sacrifice in connexion with the Cross; but in the same proportion we have lost the idea of judgment. We have revived the ethical idea of the Kingdom of God, but we have not grasped the idea, which fills both Old Testament and New Testament, that it could be set

up only by a decisive act of holy judgment upon the kingdom of the world. The Cross was indeed the Divine sacrifice, but sacrifice is not a final idea without judgment. It is not an end in itself,—except to the ascetics,—it is a means. But judgment is an end, it is final in its nature, because it is the actual vindication of holiness and the establishment of righteousness, and beyond holiness and its victory we cannot go.

1. *He will convince the world that there is judgment in the earth.* —It is evident that if by the enlightening operation of the Holy Spirit sin is known, and righteousness is known, the ground is then laid for judgment, because judgment is only the just, and proper, and true estimate of righteous men and wicked men. The Holy Spirit, therefore, convinces the world of judgment—that is to say, He brings out in prominent and living characters the whole idea of judgment; of there being a division in the world; of there being two kinds of people in the world, good and bad, righteous and wicked.

¶ There stands up everywhere in Scripture the pillar of fire and of cloud, and it comes between the camp of Israel and the camp of the Egyptians, and gives light by night to the one, but cloud and darkness to the other. The Gospel is especially penetrated by this idea of judgment; it declares the enmity of the world to God, and distinguishes between the world and those who are not of the world; it separates the followers of Christ from the world; it announces that Christ will manifest Himself to His disciples and not unto the world. It says, "Woe unto the world because of offences"; it says that "we cannot serve two masters"; that we cannot have the treasure of our heart in earth and in heaven at the same time. Our Lord Jesus Christ is Himself described as the Judge who thus separates between the righteous and the wicked, who places the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left; "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."[1]

(1) *Judgment is yet to come.*—It is very hard on the lower planes of life to convince the world of judgment, to persuade men that there is an infallible reckoning for all transgression, that no sin can be permanently concealed, that in the end the hidden things of darkness will come to light, and will receive their just

[1] J. B. Mozley, *Sermons, Parochial and Occasional*, 164.

reward. It is hard to bring this home even in the case of offences that come within the province of criminal law. A man will commit a murder and believe that he will never be found out, that the blood will not speak. He will cover over the body with sand, not thinking that one day the skeleton arm will push itself through and appeal to the sky. And yet the vast majority of people have been so convinced of judgment in the realm of criminal law that they never put themselves within its reach. How are they convinced of judgment? There is only one way. They are convinced by the judgment of an actual transgressor, by the manifested sin of a criminal. People read in the newspapers day by day of the strange ways in which the dead are avenged, and they are convinced of judgment. And yet there is always an obstinate remnant that fixes its eyes on the crimes not yet expiated, and thinks that it may sin and escape.

(2) *Judgment is now.*—It is evident that Christ referred to a judgment that had then and there commenced, for the words have a present meaning. "The prince of this world *has been* judged." We can most easily understand this by referring to a precisely similar utterance in the 31st verse of the 12th chapter: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The Saviour had just declared that by His death He should give life to the world. He had just glanced into the awful struggle that was approaching, and His soul was troubled. He had just received from heaven the assurance of final victory, and then He declared, with the glory of the triumph already brightening, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The judgment, therefore, to which He pointed was that conquest which He had already commenced of the dominion of evil, and the final victory over it which He should gain on His Cross. And the same meaning must be attached to the word "world" here, so that the verse may be rendered thus: "He shall convince the world that evil is conquered, overthrown, and shall finally pass away."

¶ "The last judgment" is a phrase which we have almost robbed of its effect because we have used it chiefly for a remote and pictorial future. We have dwelt on the final *date* of judgment, and lost sense of a *state* of judgment, a judgment always there, and always *final* in its nature. We have pictured it in

ways which have emptied it of spiritual awe, and reduced it to little more than physical terror and moral impotence. We do not realize that the prince of this world has been finally judged, and that we live in a saved world only because we live in a judged world. Either with the orthodox we have made judgment a cosmic catastrophe (and astronomy is full of them, and geology has made them too familiar), or we have reduced it, with the liberals, to the historic process on its ethical side, with its moral crises, and jail-deliveries, and fresh starts, from time to time. We have lost the note of judgment from the Cross, and so from our moral world. And we have lost it, with the orthodox, in a distant judgment scene, or with the liberals, who made it the mere Nemesis of history, which is too slow and subtle to curb the pushing hour. "The world's history is the world's judgment," says Schiller. He wished to recall the last judgment from its remoteness to be a power in the heart of present things and living conduct. But there is something more true than Schiller's famous phrase. It is not the world's history, but Christ's history that is the world's judgment. And especially is it Christ's Cross.[1]

2. "Because the prince of this world hath been judged." Who is the prince of this world? The phrase "this world" is frequently used in the New Testament to express the collective forces that are on this earth opposed to God; and in speaking of a Prince, Christ manifestly implies that evil forces are not separated, but combined and connected things; that they form a great living power, a kingdom of wrong. But the phrase means more than this; it points to a personal Evil Spirit as lord of that evil kingdom. Not in the sense that he is the cause of it all, but that he is representative of it, as being the greatest and the first. According to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, evil began far back in the spiritual world, and came from thence to man. Interpreting the phrase thus, we have the idea of evil as a power mysteriously connected with the invisible world, and of an Evil Spirit as its representative.

¶ Do you think of the prince of this world as one who holds in his tyranny a world of victims who are miserable because they struggle in his yoke? That is not the conception here at all. He represents here all that is most congenial to the world's way. He is the personalized spirit of a willing and admiring world. He is the organ of a world proud of its representative. He has its

[1] P. T. Forsyth, *Missions in State and Church*, 72.

confidence. He is the agent of methods which the world thinks essential to its prosperity and stability, which make its notion of eternal life. The world he represents has no idea that its moral methods can be bettered or its principles overthrown. To its mind the moral is an impertinence and the spiritual is a superstition—feeble, but capable of becoming dangerous. It must therefore be fought. And its antagonist is just as sensible of the antagonism. There is no compromise possible. They were destined to meet in a struggle which is inevitable and a judgment which is final—and that meeting was in the Cross.[1]

(1) The Spirit will convince the world that the prince of this world has been judged by showing that Christ has conquered sin through obedience to the will of God. And where was this so perfectly accomplished as in His life and death? All forces were in action to turn Him from submission. From first to last He was perpetually tempted to forsake His chosen path of obedience. The cold, the hunger, and the lonely temptation of the wilderness formed but the prelude to the long struggle with the Evil One, which culminated on Calvary. It was the same temptation throughout to assert His own will against His Father's will. It opened with the challenge in the wilderness, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread"; "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down"; and closed with the last taunt, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." But the cry, "It is finished," was the herald of conquest—the proclamation to the world that one Man had stemmed the tide of evil and broken its force. The moment of seeming defeat was the moment of mightiest victory.

(2) The Spirit will show that by this victory the perpetuity of evil is shattered. The darkest lie of the Evil One is this—that evil is an eternal power. Before the advent of the Gospel, the world was beginning to believe in the omnipotence of wrong. The slavery wrought by sin was so complete that men were losing faith in anything that could conquer evil, and were sinking into a dreary and hopeless fatalism. Just note the two great facts which, as the results of sin, lay at the root of this state: (*a*) *Suffering.* Men felt the pressure of its mystery. It seemed to belie the goodness of God, to darken the heaven of His love, and

[1] P. T. Forsyth, *Missions in State and Church*, 71.

prove sin to be irresistible. Its shadow rested on the ages of the past, and projected itself with a grim certainty into the future. Now suffering, in all its deepest dreadfulness, Christ endured. He became the High Priest of sorrow. He grew glorious through it. "He was perfected through sufferings," and thus revealed it to man as the education of a Father. (*b*) *Death.* The great mystery, the spoiler of human hopes, the divider of friend from friend, the sign-manual of sin's dominion. He became subject to its power. It seemed to conquer Him. It seemed to divide Him from the Father, but really it was the pledge of their eternal union. Rising from the grave, He ascended to the heavens, thus consecrating death for all men as a pathway to the Father's home. Such was Christ's conquest. It was the crisis of earth's history, the judgment and overthrow of the "prince of this world."

All hail! dear Conqueror! all hail!
Oh what a victory is Thine!
How beautiful Thy strength appears!
Thy crimson wounds, how bright they shine!

Thou camest at the dawn of day;
Armies of souls around Thee were,
Blest spirits, thronging to adore
Thy flesh, so marvellous, so fair.

Ye heavens, how sang they in your courts,
How sang the angelic choirs that day,
When from His tomb the imprisoned God,
Like the strong sunrise, broke away![1]

[1] F. W. Faber.

The Day of Knowledge and Power.

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THE DAY OF KNOWLEDGE AND POWER.

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name.—John xvi. 23.

1. OUR Lord here sums up the prerogatives and privileges of His servants in the day that was about to dawn and to last till He came again. There is nothing absolutely new in the words; substantially the promises contained in them have appeared in former parts of these discourses under somewhat different aspects and connexions. Many such promises there are in the Bible: "Ask and ye shall receive"; "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"; "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"; "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Many such promises there are, but our Lord brings them together here, in this condensed repetition, in order that the scattered rays, being thus focused, may have more power to illuminate with certitude, and to warm into hope.

2. Now it is to be noticed that the two askings which are spoken of here are expressed by different words in the Greek. Our English word "ask" means two things, either "to question" or "to request"; to ask in the sense of interrogating, in order to get information and teaching, or in the sense of beseeching, in order to get gifts. In the former sense the word is employed in the first clause of our text, and in the second sense it is employed in the central portion of it. Christ does not distinguish between two epochs in Christian experience; in the earlier and more imperfect one, prayer being offered to Christ, in the later and perfected one, prayer being offered directly to the Father. There

is not in this verse a contrast drawn between asking *the Son*, which shall cease, and asking *the Father*, which shall begin; but the first half of the verse closes the declaration of one blessing, namely, that hereafter they shall be so taught by the Spirit as to have nothing further *to inquire*; the second half of the verse begins the declaration of a new blessing, that whatsoever they shall *seek* from the Father, He will give it them in the Son's name.

There are then two things here as the marks of the Christian life all through the ages: the cessation of the ignorant questions addressed to a present Christ, and the satisfaction of desires. These may be conveniently studied under the headings given by Godet:—

I. Fulness of Knowledge.
II. Fulness of Power.

I.

Fulness of Knowledge.

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing."

When our Lord went in and out among His disciples, He was their Prophet and Teacher in this way, that, if they wanted to know anything, the meaning of a place in Scripture, the right and wrong of what was being done, or the like—anything, in short, concerning their duty—they might go straight to Him and ask Him a question about it, as the Jews of old asked the prophets who were among them. And so in the Gospel history we find them continually doing this. Now what a great and unspeakable privilege this was, we all in some sort understand and feel at once. We know what a loss it is, when we are forced to part from some parent or friend, a frail mortal like ourselves, only a little better and wiser. How much more, when they had to part from Him who is perfect and infinite Goodness and Wisdom.

The state of things which was passing was the old familiar intercourse, the questions and the answers of the daily life. The relation of the Lord to His followers, as that of teacher and disciples, made the asking of questions the most natural thing in the world. As a matter of fact, we find in the Gospels that this

is what the disciples were constantly doing. It might be a question of failure on their part: "Lord, why could not we cast it out?" It might be a moment of danger, as on the lake, when the disciples did not fall to prayer, but awoke their sleeping Lord: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" It might be some far-reaching question: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" It might be some suggested limitation of their loyalty: "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?" Especially in the last discourses recorded by St. John do we find such questions, implied or expressed. There was the question of St. Thomas, who wanted to tie our Lord down to definiteness of statement: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" There was the implied question of Philip, echoing the world-wide difficulty that besets the government of the world: "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." There was the question of the other Judas, with its shadow of the agelong perplexity, as to election and predestination: "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" And even as our Lord was speaking there was a question, as to the meaning of certain words of His, which was in the hearts, and almost on the lips, of the whole body of the Apostles: "Jesus perceived that they were desirous to ask him, and he said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves concerning this, that I said, A little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me?" And then the Lord gave them for answer the assurance that though they should be sorrowful, their sorrow should be turned into joy. Thus were the disciples constantly in the habit, as was natural, of asking questions. Often the Lord's answers seem to be purposely indirect and even evasive, but they always had reference to the particular difficulty that had been expressed. Now, the old privileged state of things, the easy, natural intercourse, was to cease. No longer would the disciples be able to turn to a present Master in time of perplexity or moment of danger. No longer would they hear the familiar accents speaking in answer to their questionings. It would be strange if the passing away of the old intercourse did not seem to the disciples to be all loss. For what condition of things could possibly seem to them better than the old?[1]

[1] A. E. Coulthard, in *The Record*, 1908, p. 508.

It is under these circumstances that Christ pronounces the words: "In that day ye shall ask me nothing." Are we, then, to understand the words as words of discouragement to the already depressed disciples, or may we take them as words of the deepest comfort: "In that day ye shall ask me nothing, because everything will be revealed to you"?

1. "*In that day.*"—That day broke at the Resurrection and attained its settled light at Pentecost. Then "the hour came" from which things would be as they are here described. In the occasional intercourse of the forty days the disciples did ask something and hear something as of old, yet the former day of living and conversing together was over, and the new day had begun. Only there was granted an intervening period of twilight in which the Presence, shown at unexpected moments and vanishing from sight, and sometimes rather felt than seen, prepared them for that other kind of seeing and for that other kind of intercourse which were to ensue and to endure.

Christ would no longer be with the faithful as a personal earthly Teacher. He had been with the Apostles, but He could teach them only in proverbs. The spiritual meaning of His words lay hidden from them. They had brought to Him many a question which He had to set aside, because they were incapable of receiving the answer. When He was risen from the dead, He would open their understanding to understand the Scriptures. They should not look to Him then for details of accidental difficulty, but would recognize the illumination of Divine Sonship, the power of the Holy Ghost, speaking within their hearts. Then would the prophet's word be fulfilled: "They shall be all taught of God."

¶ The day of the new dispensation is while Christ is with the Father. It begins to dawn when the heavens open to receive Him. It has no ending. It is the day which is as the light of seven days, the perfect illumination of grace. Christ is with the Father. The Father's Wisdom is the Head of the Church. The Spirit of Wisdom is the Life of the Church. The supernatural consciousness is the light which fills the souls of the regenerate as "the children of the day." It is a light which is at once moral, intellectual, spiritual. That day is a day of moral power, such as the world has never known before. Christ is Himself

the Light of the conscience, shining within the heart, lifting up the faithful to delight in that which is worthy of man. No civilization previously had elevated mankind as the brightness of this light elevates. It elevates all of every class, for all are invited to walk in the light of the Lord. It is a day of intellectual light. Earlier ages witnessed the brute strength of human nature, leaving monuments behind which should endure for ages. The day of Christ would see man raised to a mastery of mind over matter. The secrets of nature would be unfolded. The elements of science were to be learnt as never before, under the discipline of the Christian Church. The spiritual light of the coming day would, however, be its true glory. God would be known in His personal Sovereignty, and in His relation to the world as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. Man would be conscious of himself as belonging to a higher order of existence than could find a home within this present world. The faithful would find their true joy in that God lifted up upon them the light of His countenance.[1]

2. "*Ye shall ask me nothing.*"—Christ's promise to His disciples in this place is that a time shall come to them when they shall no longer be questioners; when they shall have no necessity to be questioners; when they shall know all things, and not need any man to teach them. Christ was proclaiming progress and not retrogression when He said: "In that day ye shall ask me no more questions."

¶ It is better for a boy to puzzle out the meaning of a Latin book by his own brains and the help of a dictionary than lazily to use an interlinear translation. And, though we do not always feel it, and are often tempted to think how blessed it would be if we had an infallible Teacher visible here at our sides, it is a great deal better for us that we have not, and it is a step in advance that He has gone away. Many eager and honest Christian souls, hungering after certainty and rest, have cast themselves in these latter days into the arms of an infallible Church. I doubt whether any such questioning mind has found what it sought; and I am sure that it has taken a step downwards, in passing from the spiritual guidance realized by our own honest industry and earnest use of the materials supplied to us in Christ's word, to any external authority which comes to us to save us the trouble of thinking, and to confirm to us truth which we have not made our own by search and effort.[2]

(1) In place of the former questioning, we have *a completed*

[1] R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, ii. (pt. ii.) 276. [2] A. Maclaren.

revelation.—Great and wonderful and unspeakably precious as were and are the words of Jesus Christ, His deeds are far more so. The death of Christ has told us things that Christ before His death could not tell. The resurrection of Christ has cast light upon all the darkest places of man's destiny which Christ, before His resurrection, could not by any words so illuminate. The ascension of Christ has opened doors for thought, for faith, for hope, which were fast closed, notwithstanding all His teachings, until He had burst them asunder and passed to His throne.

Breezes of spring, all earth to life awaking,—
Birds swiftly soaring through the sunny sky,—
The butterfly its lonely prison breaking,—
The seed upspringing, which had seemed to die,—

Types such as these a word of hope have spoken,
Have shed a gleam of light around the tomb;
But weary hearts longed for a surer token,
A clearer ray, to dissipate its gloom.

And this was granted! See the Lord ascending,
On crimson clouds of evening calmly borne,
With hands outstretched, and looks of love still bending
On His bereaved ones, who no longer mourn.

"I am the Resurrection," hear Him saying;
"I am the Life; he who believes in Me
Shall never die,—the souls My call obeying,
Soon, where I am, for evermore shall be."

Sing Hallelujah! light from Heaven appearing,
The mystery of life and death is plain;
Now to the grave we can descend unfearing,
In sure and certain hope to rise again![1]

(2) We have *an inward Teacher.*—We have a Divine Spirit who will come to us if we will, and teach us, blessing the exercise of our own faculties, and guiding us, not, indeed, into the uniform perception of the intellectual aspects of Christian truth, but into the apprehension and the loving possession, as a power in our lives, of all the truth that we need to mould our characters and to raise us to the likeness of Himself. Only, let

[1] Jane Borthwick.

us remember what such a method of teaching demands from us. It requires that we honestly use the revelation that is given us; it requires that we loyally, lovingly, trustfully, submit ourselves to the teaching of that Spirit who will dwell in us; it requires that we bring our lives up to the height of our present knowledge, and make everything that we know a factor in shaping what we do and what we are.

¶ If we would know truth, we must not expect to advance by intellectual certainty, but by spiritual power. The truth must be a life. As we live true to His ascended Being, we find the power of that life. The Spirit of Truth is the Spirit of Life, so that, as we live by His inspirations, we are taught the fulness of His mysteries.[1]

Up, and away!
  Thy Saviour's gone before,
Why dost thou stay,
  Dull soul? Behold, the door
Is open, and His precepts bid thee rise,
Whose power hath vanquished all thine enemies.

In vain thou say'st
  Thou art buried with thy Saviour,
If thou delay'st
  To show by thy behaviour,
That thou art risen with Him. Till thou shine
Like Him, how canst thou say His light is thine?

Open thine eyes,
  Sin-seized soul, and see
What cobweb ties
  They are that trammel thee;
Not profit, pleasure, honours, as thou thinkest,
But loss, pain, shame, at which thou vainly winkest.

All that is good
  Thy Saviour dearly bought
With His heart's blood,
  And it must then be sought,
Where He keeps residence, who rose this day;
Linger no longer then; up, and away![2]

[1] R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, ii. (pt. ii.) 280.
[2] G. Herbert.

II.

Fulness of Power.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name."

The second feature of the apostolic illumination mentioned by Jesus in the text is unlimited influence with God through prayer. The Apostles were to have at command the whole power of God; the power of miracles, to heal diseases; of prophecy, to foretell things to come bearing on the Church's interest, which it was desirable that believers should know; of providence, to make all events subservient to their well-being, and that of the cause in which they laboured. Except the miraculous elements, which most Protestants agree in regarding as peculiar to the apostolic age, this magnificent promise of Jesus is made to all who aspire to Christian manhood, and is fulfilled to all who reach it.

1. *The security of the promise.*—It has been remarked, and with much truth, that whenever our Lord would declare some very important fact or doctrine, such as might be considered a fundamental truth of Christianity, or a law of His spiritual kingdom, He invariably prefaced His declaration with the emphatic words, "Verily, verily." If, when we read the New Testament, we note the passages in which these reiterated words occur, we see that they are always in connexion with some important Christian truth. In point of fact, it is no exaggeration to say that we might condense the distinctive teaching of Christianity in the few verses which are prefaced with these particles of speech, and draw up from them a succinct summary of those essential verities of the Christian creed which we hold to be necessary to our salvation.[1]

Shortly before His ascension to glory, when He would comfort His disciples in their sorrow at the prospect of His near departure, when He would encourage them to brave all the tribulation through which they must pass for His sake, Christ, in revealing to them the truth of His mighty intercession for them at the Throne of Grace, and for all prayerful Christians in all ages, emphasizes His declaration concerning prayer, and thus seems to

[1] Dean F. Pigou, *Faith and Practice*, 246.

give it a prominent place in the system of Christianity. He confirms His promise by an oath, that by these two immutable things which cannot be broken, His promise and His oath, we might have the strong consolation that our prayers penetrate through the clouds into the ears of the Lord of hosts. We are to pray, building our heart's trust on the word and oath of the Lord, and not doubting that our prayers are heard. To doubt Christ's words, spoken with so much solemnity, as the culminating word of admonition before He returned to the Father, is to plunge into a miserable unbelief from which nothing can extricate us.

¶ There was that about Christ's "Verily, verily I say unto you" which seemed to carry conviction and allay the spirit of controversy. The way in which the early Church used to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus" speaks volumes for the vividness of the impression which those words made on those who first heard them. We cannot now reproduce that impression or even imagine it with any great success; but if we wish to do full justice to the situation, we must allow for the result produced, and give to it the weight which it deserves.[1]

2. *The comprehensiveness of the promise.*—Christ's words are: "If ye shall ask *anything* of the Father, he will give it you in my name."

(1) God is not only able but willing to give all that is asked of Him. It is nothing for Him to give. He delights to give. It is the joy of the Divine life to be giving all the while.

¶ The most delightsome day in the life of the Empress Josephine, as she wrote in one of her letters, was when, coming through the Alps with her husband, she was left for a little while to rest in a humble cottage. She saw that the eyes of the lonely woman there were stained with tears and asked her trouble. The woman said it was poverty. "How much," asked Josephine, "would relieve it?" "Oh," she said, "there is no relieving it; it would require four hundred francs to save our little vineyard and our goats." Josephine counted out of her purse the four hundred francs into the woman's lap, who gathered them together, and fell down and kissed her feet.[2]

(2) The promise to prayer is not limited to any special class of subjects. It includes all things, both temporal and eternal,

[1] W. B. Selbie, *Aspects of Christ*, 163.
[2] D. J. Burrell, *The Verities of Jesus*, 141.

material and spiritual. The objects of the outer creation are not unworthy to be the gifts of God, for they are the creatures of God. He created them for us. He created us and them for His only begotten Son. No created object has any end short of the glory of Christ. Consequently there is nothing that is beyond the circle of legitimate prayer. We are too apt to doubt whether we may pray for temporal mercies. The real reason is that we doubt whether all created things are really worthy of God as their Creator. He who created them with a purpose can use them for the highest of all purposes. The universe is one, but manifold. It has unity of purpose, *from* God in Christ. It has unity of purpose, *for* God in Christ. We must be careful to remember that we cannot take anything out of its place in creation. It will work for the glory of Christ; and if we will use it for Christ's glory, we shall share in its blessing. If, however, we suppose that these meaner things are just created for our indulgence, and use them for the purposes of our sin, then we set them apart from the dispensation of God's love, and must get them how and whence we can; and instead of finding a blessing if we do acquire them, we shall find that they have turned to be to us a curse. If only the necessities of earth drove us to live more conscientiously for the glory of God, we should find that the weariness of earth, instead of dragging us down, would urge us to efforts more worthy of heaven.

¶ A prayer of the Athenians: "Rain, rain, O dear Zeus, down on the ploughed fields of the Athenians, and on the plains." In truth we ought not to pray at all, or we ought to pray in this simple and noble fashion.[1]

¶ Prayer can obtain everything; it can open the windows of heaven, and shut the gates of hell; it can put a holy constraint upon God, and detain an angel till he leave a blessing; it can open the treasures of rain, and soften the iron ribs of rocks, till they melt into tears and a flowing river: prayer can unclasp the girdles of the North, saying to a mountain of ice, "Be thou removed thence, and cast into the bottom of the sea"; it can arrest the sun in the midst of his course, and send the swift-winged winds upon our errand; and all those strange things, and secret decrees, and unrevealed transactions which are above the clouds

[1] Marcus Aurelius.

and far beyond the regions of the stars, shall combine in ministry and advantages for the praying man.[1]

3. *The conditions of the promise.*—There are no absolute conditions laid down in the text, but there are two conditions implied.

(1) It is by the next word in His promise that Christ brings us to the full meaning and the very heart of prayer. God will give those things which we really ask of Him as God: "Whatsoever things ye ask *the Father*." If prayer be, as the Intercessor of our race always teaches, nothing but the going of the children to the Father to ask of Him what they need, it is an action of faith and self-sacrifice. "Our Father" must be the beginning of it. "Thy will be done" must be its centre. In the Divine relationship of the members of a family to one another we have the standing parable of prayer.

Could there be any character attributed to God in which we would rather approach Him? What attribute would so well imply His love and regard for our interests as His paternal relation to us? Earthly fathers give not their sons stones when they ask for bread, or a serpent instead of a fish; if, then, they "being evil know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask him?"

¶ From Him all Fatherhood in heaven and earth gets its name. And fatherhood at its best, as we know it, is but a faint adumbration of what it means in its perfection in God of love and solicitude, will and power to help the children who are His own. And that is what men and women are, not mere intricate inventions, mechanical toys playing their little part in this great machine, the world, but God's children with points of affinity in their nature with His own, and capable of fellowship with Him. And so to understand the relations of God to man and man to God, you have not to go to the models in the pattern shop, or to the factory with its operatives, or to the court-house with its laws, or even to the palace with its rooms of state and subjects in obeisance before their monarch. But go to the home, go to the nursery; see a father with his children, ay, better still, a mother with her prattling little ones with a thousand requests a day, and learn there what God is.[2]

[1] Jeremy Taylor.

[2] R. J. Drummond, *Faith's Perplexities*, 183.

¶ Our soul is so specially loved of Him that is highest, that it overpasseth the knowing of all creatures—that is to say, there is no creature that is made that may fully know how much and how sweetly and how tenderly our Maker loveth us. And therefore we may with grace and His help stand in spiritual beholding, with everlasting marvel of this high, overpassing, inestimable love that Almighty God hath to us of His goodness. And therefore we may ask of our Lover with reverence all that we will.[1]

(2) Our petitions are answered "in the name of Christ." The reading, "He will give it you in my name," is preferable to the reading of the Authorized Version, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name."

We could make no claim to the smallest gift of God if Christ had not died, if Christ had not risen again—died for our sins, risen again for our justification; if Christ had not ascended to the right hand of the Father; if He were not there even now, our Mediator, our Intercessor, our Advocate, our High Priest. We must recognize that in Christ, and only in Christ, God is perfectly well pleased; and in us only so far as we are found in Him; that all our acceptance with God, all our right to be heard by God, rests solely and exclusively on the work for sinners which Christ once accomplished on Calvary, and is evermore pleading in heaven.

But the fact that the Father gives in the name of Christ, by whom He made, sustains, and governs the world, and through whom all His redeeming love is manifested to His earthly children, presupposes that they present their requests through Him as their Mediator—that is, in His name. Our prayer goes up through the same channel through which God's gifts come down. He who would receive from God in Christ's name must pray Christ's prayer, "Not my will, but thine be done." And then, though many wishes may be unanswered, and many weak petitions unfulfilled, and many desires unsatisfied, the essential spirit of the prayer will be answered, and, His will being done in us and on us, our wishes will acquiesce in it and desire nothing besides. To him who can thus pray in Christ's name in the deepest sense, and after Christ's pattern, every door in God's treasure-house flies open, and he may take as much of the treasure as he desires. The Master bends lovingly over such a soul, and with outstretched hand says,

[1] Julian the Anchoress.

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

¶ We all know with what confidence the clerk of a business house goes to a bank with a draft "in the name" of his firm. If he were to present it in his own name, that would be a very different affair. The demand made on behalf of the firm is instantly honoured. We can see that there is all the difference in this instance between acting in a private, and acting in a public capacity. To ask as belonging to a business corporation for the purposes of that corporation is one thing. To ask as a private individual, with merely personal ends in view, is quite another thing.[1]

[1] A. W. Robinson, *The Voice of Joy and Health*, 68.

Life in the Knowledge of God.

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Life in the Knowledge of God.

And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.—John xvii. 3.

1. The prayer of Christ from which this text is taken is in some respects the most precious relic of the past. We have here the words which Christ addressed to God in the critical hour of His life—the words in which He uttered the deepest feeling and thought of His Spirit, clarified and concentrated by the prospect of death. Even among the prayers of Christ this stands by itself as that in which He gathered up the retrospect of His past and surveyed the future of His Church; in which, as if already dying, He solemnly presented to the Father Himself, His work, and His people. Recognizing the grandeur of the occasion, we may be disposed to agree with Melanchthon, who, when giving his last lecture, shortly before his death, said: "There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself."[1]

2. The essence of eternal life is here defined and represented as consisting in the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ His messenger, knowledge being taken comprehensively as including faith, love, and worship, and the emphasis lying on the *objects* of such knowledge. The Christian religion is described in opposition to paganism on the one hand, with its many gods, and to Judaism on the other, which, believing in the one true God, rejected the claims of Jesus to be the Christ. It is further so described as to exclude by anticipation Arian and Socinian views of the Person of Christ. The names of God and of Jesus are put on a level as objects of religious regard, whereby an importance

[1] Marcus Dods, *The Gospel of St. John*, 247.

is assigned to the latter incompatible with the dogma that Jesus is a mere man.

3. It may seem strange that, in addressing His Father, Jesus should deem it needful to explain wherein eternal life consists; and some, to get rid of the difficulty, have supposed that the sentence is an explanatory reflection interwoven into the prayer by the Evangelist. Yet the words were perfectly appropriate in the mouth of Jesus Himself. The first clause is a confession by the man Jesus of His own faith in God His Father as the supreme object of knowledge; and the whole sentence is really an argument in support of the prayer, Glorify Thy Son. The force of the declaration lies in what it implies respecting the existing ignorance of men concerning the Father and His Son. It is as if Jesus said: Father, Thou knowest that eternal life consists in knowing Thee and Me. Look around, then, and see how few possess such knowledge. The heathen world knoweth Thee not —it worships idols; the Jewish world is equally ignorant of Thee in spirit and in truth; for while boasting of knowing Thee, it rejects Me. The whole world is overspread with a dark veil of ignorance and superstition. Take Me out of it, therefore, not because I am weary of its sin and darkness, but that I may become to it a sun. Hitherto My efforts to illuminate the darkness have met with small success. Grant Me a position from which I can send forth light over all the earth.

I.

Life Eternal.

1. What is the meaning of "eternal"? The answer of the ordinary man would be, "Something that lasts for ever." With him eternity would simply mean endless time; it would mean duration, or permanence, or endless succession, or unalterability; it would mean adding so much time together that you could add no more. And so the sort of metaphors that people have used to express eternity have been the metaphors of the circle or the sand on the seashore. We have all been told that if we tried to count the sand on the seashore we should never reach the idea of

eternity. Now, that sort of language is eminently misleading. "Time shall be no more." That "phantom of succession of time" is wholly inapplicable to the life of God. With God there is no time—no past, no future; all is the everlasting now. It is only in consequence of our present limitations, only in consequence of that great condition of time under which we live, that we are unable to think of God as living out of time, and that we are compelled to think of Him as living only in endless time. The life eternal is the real life; it is the life that is life indeed.

¶ The Greek word *bios* and the Greek word *zoe* both mean "life" and are translated by "life"; but they are words of entirely different significance in the Greek. The first word signifies chiefly animal life—the brief space of time, the brief space of life through which we have to pass; bare existence is the word used, for example, in such passages as "What is your life? It is even as a vapour." But the other word *zoe* belongs to an entirely different and higher conception. In the New Testament, it is used almost, if not entirely, for the inherent principle of life which is involved in the very being of God Himself, so that the first word means conscious existence; the second word means the sort of life of which God is capable, and we have it in all such passages as "should not perish, but have eternal life." "I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Lord. "I am the bread of life."[1]

¶ Even so is man: No matter how well he may know the law governing his animal personality, and the laws governing matter, these laws do not give him the least indications as to how he is to act with that piece of bread which he has in his hands—whether to give it to his wife, a stranger, his dog, or eat it himself; whether to defend this piece, or give it to him who asks for it. But the life of man consists only in the solution of these and similar questions.[2]

2. There would be little worth or significance in the mere endless prolongation of life, apart from the question of the kind of life that is to be lived for ever. The life that Christ promises us is of an order altogether higher than the life of ordinary experience. It is a life that lifts us up to a new region above the cares and meannesses of this world, that makes us indifferent to most of the ends and ideals for which the mass of men live, and at least independent of the pleasures to which they are so wedded. Eternal life, in fact, is spiritual life. When the spirit, the highest

[1] Archbishop W. Alexander.

[2] Tolstoy, *Works*, xvi. 281.

part of our nature, is called forth unto full activity and matured to its full stature, and when it subdues and regulates the whole man, then we have entered on this new plane of existence.

3. This spiritual life may be ours here and now. It is an error to connect the thought of eternal life exclusively with the future. If we are of God's elect, we are now living this eternal life. At this very moment the eternal life of God is throbbing in our hearts. Every act of prayer and communion with God, every effort after righteousness and truth, every enterprise of love and mercy, is a manifestation of this life. The gift of eternal life is a present possession, not merely a future expectation. We have all been baptized into this life, we have all been made partakers of this life, we are all exhorted to show forth this life.

¶ Too often is eternal life regarded as the reward of a life of active virtue, as the far-off hope which stimulates the fainting heart to "patient continuance in well-doing"; too often is it supposed that only when the battle is over and the victory won shall we pass beneath the dark gateway of death into the bright peace of the heavenly Kingdom. But, on the other hand, the herald of Christ came with the cry, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," a cry which Christ Himself confirmed by proclaiming to His hearers, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." Eternal life, then, is not set before the world as the prize of patient purity, the reward of long-continued well-doing, or the stimulus to incite men to a life of holiness. It is not a glory which only after death will crown the successful endeavours of the faithful; it is the purity, the well-doing, the holiness itself. It is the knowledge of God and Christ, with all the spiritual virtues which attend it—knowledge which, if the rational nature of man be no delusion, may be ours now; virtues which, if the life of Christ have any significance, if His blessed example and exhortations have any meaning for us, may adorn our present earthly life.[1]

II.

Eternal Life as Knowledge of God in Christ.

1. *It is knowledge.*—Knowledge is a word of more than one meaning, and that knowledge of God which is eternal life has very

[1] A. Semple, *Scotch Sermons* (1880), 333.

little in common with that knowledge of Him which is called theology. For there is a difference, and that a fundamental difference, between knowing a thing and knowing *about* it; there is a difference, and that a fundamental difference, between the knowledge which we gain from books and that which comes through feeling.

¶ Those who "know God" most worthily are not the intellectually powerful, but the spiritually sensitive, and very often such are found among the "poor of this world." To them is given the higher vision. The husband knows his wife, not by keen intellectual estimates of her character, but by the insight of a close and intimate fellowship. In this way the mother knows her child, and adjusts all her relations by the knowledge. The friend could not tell us why he loves his friend, or recount those elements of character which he admires. Heart knows heart, and love knits bonds. And the innermost secret is that we must *feel* God, and by the feeling gain our knowledge of Him.[1]

¶ The mere knowing of the understanding is never life, but only the instrument or tool of life. That which my understanding, my logical faculty, knows is, so far, outside of me. I may build my life *on* it. But *of* it I cannot build my life. I know that twelve times twelve are a hundred and forty-four, that London lies nearly two hundred miles from Liverpool, and that June is likely to bring warm days and December cold. And on each of those bits of knowledge I build up now and again fragments of my life. They are useful to me in my planning and contriving; but they are not life. But I know the remorse that is the fruit of sin, the pleading of the Holy Spirit in my conscience, the look of love in my friend's eyes, the bliss of the summer sunshine, the chill pain of a great bereavement; and *that* knowing is itself of the very texture of my life. If you could take this strange abstract thing, my life, and divide it up into its several elements, you would find it all made up of knowings such as these. They are of its essence. For these knowings in me are not information given me by others, not inferences reached by syllogism, not even convictions grasped by closest reasoning, but immediate realizations, instant experiences. And so these are not the furniture of life, but life itself. And if the eternal life consists in knowing certain objects, then the knowing must be of this immediate kind, facts of the soul, realizations woven into the very structure of the self.[2]

[1] R. T., *Light for Life's Even-tide*, 79.
[2] R. C. Armstrong, *Memoir and Sermons*, 253.

Comrades, I said, who to the West
Have through a thousand dangers pressed,
  Let not the little space
  Remaining to our race
Run out before our senses find
Experience of the world behind
  The courses of the Sun,
  Where people there are none.
Consider what hath been your lot:
Not for brute life were ye begot:
  But that ye might pursue
  Virtue and knowledge too.[1]

2. *It is knowledge of God.*—The one thing needful for men, the great cry of our nature, in which all other cries are swallowed up, is for knowledge—the knowledge of God. To know the true God has been the deep desire of living souls through all time. Wearied by the changes of a fleeting world, finding no repose in the best that the finite can give, men of earnest minds long to know the Eternal that they may rest in Him. An old mystic has said: "God is an unutterable sigh of the human soul." With greater truth we may reverse the saying, and affirm that the human soul is a never-ending sigh after God. In its deepest recesses there lives or slumbers inextinguishable longing after Him, and the more we consider the nature of that longing, the more we discover that what it aims at is not a mere intellectual apprehension of God, but a personal relationship to Him. It is essentially of a practical nature. It is an impulse to draw nigh to God, to place ourselves in personal fellowship with Him from the conviction that He hath made these hearts of ours for Himself, and they are altogether restless till they find their rest in Him. And thus the cry of the earnest has always been that of the disciple: "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." The dream that has haunted the earnest of the world has ever been this—to live the blessed life man must know the true God, and Christ proclaims that dream to be a fact.

¶ What does knowing God mean? It does not mean knowing Him by name, knowing about Him, knowing Him as a stranger and foreigner, whose speech and ways we have not been accustomed to; it means knowing Him in the sense in which we know

[1] Dante, *Inferno*, xxvi. (trans. by Shadwell).

a father, or mother, or friend, whom we love and value above every one else; whose ways and thoughts we are thoroughly acquainted with; and who, we feel, knows us thoroughly, feels with us, cares for us, and longs for our being happy.[1]

3. *It is knowledge of God in Christ.* — The great want of humanity is the knowledge of God. This want is met by Jesus Christ whom God has sent. Christ has power over all that He might give eternal life. It is He that gives eternal life: it is He that gives the knowledge of the only true God which *is* eternal life. There is nothing that tends to life in the knowledge you have apart from Him. For the knowledge of the true God and for eternal life we are utterly and entirely dependent on Jesus Christ. Christ came to give us this knowledge, and how did He give it? Not simply by telling us certain truths or teaching certain doctrines about God, but by living among us, as God-man in the flesh breathing our cerulean air, and speaking our human speech, loving us with a human heart, and healing and helping us with human hands, and then telling us that he who had seen Him had seen the Father. This is eternal life, that we should see the glory of God—the love of God—in the face of Jesus Christ.

¶ The latest taken away of those who made the happiness of my Oxford life was Robert Gandell, who ended his days at Wells, of which cathedral he was Canon:—but who was chiefly known at Oxford (where he had passed all his time), first, as Michel Fellow of Queen's; then, as Tutor of Magdalen Hall and Fellow of Hertford College; but especially as Hebrew Lecturer, and Professor of Syriac and Arabic. I have never known a man who with severe recondite learning combined in a more exquisite degree that peculiar *Theological instinct* without which an English Hebraist is no better than,—in fact is scarcely as good as,—a learned Jew.[2]

¶ "Jesus Christ whom thou didst send." He is the key to the difficulty which we all must feel more or less when we speak of knowing God. For us men in this human life the knowledge of the Father is the knowledge of the Son, the knowledge of God is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We have before us in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ the satisfaction of this need of a divinity

[1] R. W. Church, *Village Sermons*, 143.
[2] J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, i. p. xxii.

which is, if not nearer, at least more apparent, to our human life, and more possible for mortal men to approach. We have before us in the Gospels the picture of God clothed with humanity—treading the streets of an earthly city, living that very life of struggle which seems at first sight to be at the very opposite pole of existence from God. Again and again, through the prison bars of that humanity, there flashed forth the light of the divinity that was in Him; but His life was a human life—a life like yours and mine; a life which felt pain and disappointment and temptation, and a life consequently which, though at far distance, it is possible for us to know and to imitate.[1]

4. What is it to know Christ? Is it to trust Him? Not simply that, if we trust only in something He did long ago. Is it to love Him? Not simply that, if we love Him only as He stands far back in the past, for the redemption He achieved then. What is it to know Him? It is to have Him pressing Himself, with all the power that ever was in Him *still* in Him, upon our hearts to-day. It is to be conscious that He is for ever taking *my* life afresh and impressing Himself upon it afresh. It is to hear Him calling to me, not down the centuries from long ago, but from here—close at my side, with a voice that is newly lifted to-day, an invitation that is newly given to-day. It is not to be inspired by what He was, but to feel His power now coming straight from the living heart of Him to me. It is to experience, not the reflex influence of what He did far back in the history of mankind, but the direct influence of what He does. It is to discern, amid the figures which crowd the canvas of our life, that One Figure moving ceaselessly to and fro. The Real Presence, if you like. To know Christ in this sense—that every moment He comes with a new ministry to snatch me out of my littleness into His greatness—that is eternal life. To know Christ in this sense—that He gives the secret of life newly to me ever and ever again—that is eternal life. To know Christ in this sense—that He repeats to-day every blessing He bestowed in other days, changing the form of it to meet the changing need, answering to every hour's requirement with grace newly-born out of His great and loving heart—to know Him so is to take life from Him now, is eternal life.[2]

[1] E. Hatch, *Memoirs*, 187.

[2] H. W. Clark, *Meanings and Methods of the Spiritual Life*, 21.

¶ Knowing Christ makes us live as God lives, so far as that can be for us. Knowing Christ makes us live as God lives—that is the miracle—sets us into worlds where limitations and sorrows and dyings cease to have any meaning. Know Christ, and the wearinesses and weaknesses by which an unceasing cry is wrung out from the world cannot touch your true life to harm it any more than they can touch God's; for Christ gives you eternal life. Know Christ, and you cannot die any more than God can die; for Christ gives you eternal life. There is nothing partial about the blessing Christ bestows. Eternal life is a thing others dare not speak of; but He gives that because He Himself possesses it, and, in giving that, gives all. One may look on this trial of humanity and another may look on that; one voice may speak a word to make this struggle lighter, and another may possess some secret to strengthen the soul in that conflict—Christ, when we know Him, does not patch and mend life so, but just lifts us away out of all these things into the eternal worlds, so that trial and struggle and conflict are to us no more than they are to Himself, to God. One has the secret that will make life worthier, he thinks; and another speaks the word to make life happier, he thinks: Christ bids us just know Him, and all is done.[1]

(1) Knowledge of Christ implies *obedience*.—"To know Jesus"—what does it mean? Here is a guiding word from the Apostle John: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar." Then how many of us know Him? "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not . . . ." Then knowledge implies obedience. There can be no knowledge of Christ without obedience. Without obedience we may have a few ideas about Him, but we do not know Him. If we are destitute of obedience, then that which we assume to be knowledge is no knowledge at all, and we must give it another name. Obedience is essential. What is obedience? Confining our inquiry strictly to the human plane, what is essentially implied in obedience? When one man obeys another it is implied that he subjects his will to the will of the other, and works in harmony with its demands. The oarsmen in our university boats have to subject their wills to the will of the strokesman, whose stroke determines and controls the rest. The oarsmen have but one will. That is obedience, a will attuned to the will of another, and without that attuning of the will no knowledge of Christ can ever be gained.

[1] H. W. Clark, *Meanings and Methods of the Spiritual Life*, 24.

¶ And once when he was walking with Francis and came to a cross-way where one could go to Florence, to Siena or to Arezzo, and Brother Masseo asked, "Father, which way shall we take?" Francis answered him, "The way God wishes." But Brother Masseo asked further, "How shall we know God's will?" And Francis answered: "That I will now show you. In the name of holy obedience I order you to start turning round and round in the road here, as the children do, and not to stop until I tell you to." Then Brother Masseo began to whirl round and round as children do, and he became so giddy that he often fell down; but as Francis said nothing to him, he got up again and continued. At last as he was turning round with great vigour, Francis said, "Stop and do not move!" And he stood still, and Francis asked him, "How is your face turned?" Brother Masseo answered, "Towards Siena!" Then said Francis, "It is God's will that we shall go to Siena to-day."[1]

(2) Knowledge of Christ means *love*.—"He that loveth not knoweth not God." Then how many of us know Him? No love: no knowledge! May we not slightly alter the former word of the Apostle, and read it thus—"He that saith, I know Him, and loveth not, is a liar." It would be just as reasonable for a man without eyes to claim that he sees the stars as for a man without love to claim that he knows the Lord. Without love we cannot know Christ. What is love? It is indefinable, as indefinable as fragrance or light. Our descriptive words are at the best only vague and remote. Though we cannot define a sentiment, we can sometimes suggest it by its effects, and this will suffice for our immediate purpose. Love is "good will toward men." Observe, good *will* toward men, not merely good wish; willing good, not only wishing it! To wish a thing and to will it, may be two quite different things. Wishing may be only a sweet and transient sentiment; willing implies effort, active and persistent work. Wishing dreams; willing creates. Love is good will, the willing of good toward all men, the effort to think the best of all men, and to help them on to the best. That is love.

¶ The path of the intellect is not the path that brings the soul into that Sacred Presence which it seeks. He is reached by another means altogether. What is it? Let the soul take to itself the "wings of love," and the distance between it and Him will be covered in a moment. The mountain will become a plain,

[1] J. Jörgensen, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 110.

and He who seemed to be afar off will be found to be nigh at hand. Or, to use the figure which Browning employs, love is the single "leap" that gains Him, which leap the mere intellectual faculty is powerless to take.[1]

(3) Knowledge of Christ is *likeness*.—Knowledge necessitates likeness. Have we not abundant proof of its truth? Two unlikes cannot know each other. Two men who are morally unlike each other may live together, and neither can possibly know the contents of the other's life. How would you describe pain to a man who has never experienced it? He cannot know it. He cannot even imagine it. Pain is known only by the pain-ridden. Knowledge implies likeness. The principle has a wide application. To *know* we must *be*. To know music, we must be musical. To know art, we must be artistic. To know Christ, we must be Christlike. "This is life, . . . to know Jesus." To know Jesus is to share His life! His life is eternal. Life eternal is just Christ-life. This is life eternal, to have life like Christ, to know Him in spirit and in truth.

All grows, says Doubt, all falls, decays and dies;
  There is no second life for flower or tree:
O suffering soul, be humble and be wise,
  Nor dream new worlds have any need of thee!

And yet, cries Hope, the world is deep and wide;
  And the full circle of our life expands,
Broadening and brightening, on an endless tide
  That ebbs and flows between these mystic lands.

Not endless life, but endless love I crave,
  The gladness and the calm of holier springs,
The hope that makes men resolute and brave,
  The joyful life in the great life of things.

The soul that loves and works will need no praise;
  But, fed with sunlight and with morning breath,
Will make our common days eternal days,
  And fearless greet the mild and gracious death.[2]

[1] J. Flew, *Studies in Browning*, 145.
[2] W. M. W. Call.

Environment and Character.

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Environment and Character.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.—John xvii. 15.

1. The last words of Christ to His disciples, clustered round Him in that solemn hour when He took leave of them before He died, were words of prayer. It was a prayer, as reported to us, which threw into pregnant words the meaning of His whole work, but it was also steeped in the tender thought which fills the heart of one who parts from those he has long loved. As He prayed for those around Him, who were to spread among men the good news of God, commending them to His Father's care, every word was touched with the human tenderness of separation. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one"—one in love, one in that will of God which is the bond of love. Keep them from the world, not from the outward world, but from the evil of the world. With that prayer, Christ defines the position of His followers in their life among men, and the meaning of it is our subject.

2. This does not mean that Christ wished His followers never to die—always to be in the world. It is appointed for us all to die. But our Lord did not wish His followers to die before their time. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." All, indeed, do not reach this fulness of years; and Christians as well as others are cut off by illness and accidents. Death claims all ages for his own. Many also die from loyalty to duty and to love. Blessings dearer than life may be in danger; evils worse than death may be threatened to our country and ourselves. Now Christians, like others, may have to fight even

to the death for national life and liberty. And loyalty to love and loyalty to duty may bring an early death on the followers of Christ as well as on others. They may see dear ones sinking into a watery grave, or surrounded by consuming fires, and they may risk and sacrifice their lives in seeking to rescue them from death.

When Jesus' followers give up their lives either in loyalty to duty or in loyalty to love, they give them up in accordance with the will of God; but Jesus knew there was a real danger that Christians would be taken out of the world when they should continue to live in it, and it was not His wish that this should be. The danger arose both from the hatred of Christ's enemies and from the mistaken beliefs and actings of Christ's followers themselves.

I.

The Sphere.

The world was to be their sphere. "I pray not that thou shouldest take from the world."

What is Christ's meaning for the term "world"? It is this passing scene of time, with its transient pleasures and sorrows, pursuits and loves; and the mass of men that live for these alone. There is the world of men, of business, of politics, of labour for wealth and fame—the storm of life in which we sail. Pray, men say, to be taken out of that; out into the deserts or the quietude of our retired rooms; in solitary meditation to live the life of God. I do *not* pray, said Christ, that you should be removed from that—only from its evil.

1. Christ could not ask that they might be taken out of the world, for that was the scene of their witnessing and labour. However keenly they might wish to escape from its hate and opposition, it was necessary for themselves, for the world, and for their Master, that they should stay as the salt and leaven of human society. But He prays that God would "keep them from the evil one." Divine grace is to surround these simple souls so that Satan's fingers may not defile their lives. They also must learn to say, "He hath nothing in me." This is a great thing to

ask, but it is the path to victory. "The problem of the necessity of living in the midst of earthly influences and yet of escaping from their evil is difficult with an exceeding difficulty. Yet it is not without solution. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel in the court of Darius, are the likenesses "of the small transfigured band whom the world cannot tame."

¶ Some devout men in spite of the prayer of Jesus, thought it best to renounce the world, and lived in dens and caves of the earth. The Pillar Hermits of Syria lived long years on the tops of pillars set up in the open air. The earliest and most famous of this class of solitaries, whose example the others followed as well as they could, was Simeon, a Syrian monk. In his boyhood Simeon had been a shepherd. He spent nine years of his youth in a Syrian monastery, without ever moving outside the walls of his narrow cell. After this he became dissatisfied with the convent, as giving him too few means of self-denial, and presently invented the new form of penitence which has become associated with his name. He withdrew about the year 423 A.D. to a mountain near Antioch, and fixed his abode upon the top of a pillar which he caused to be erected for himself. The height of it was at first six cubits, but this was gradually increased to thirty-six, or nearly sixty feet. The diameter of the top was only four feet; but it was surrounded with a railing which secured the poor man from falling off, and allowed him the relief of leaning against it. Here Simeon spent the last thirty or more years of his life. He clothed himself with the skins of beasts, and wore also an iron collar round his neck. He preached twice a day to the crowds that gathered at the foot of the column to witness his persevering devotions. Simeon died on his pillar at the age of seventy-two, and was buried with great solemnity at Antioch.

Lord Tennyson has a poem about him with the title, "Saint Simeon Stylites," that is "Saint Simeon of the Pillar." It consists of a solemn prayer to God and address to the people by the hermit on the last day of his life. The words which the poet puts into his mouth show a curious mixture of deep penitence for sin and great spiritual pride in his long career of penance. Here are some of them,—

> Bethink Thee, Lord, while Thou and all the saints
> Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth
> House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
> Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,

And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls,
I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,
To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the saints;
Or in the night, after a little sleep,
I wake: the chill stars sparkle; I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.
I wear an undress'd goatskin on my back;
A grazing iron collar grinds my neck;
And in my weak, lean arms I lift the cross,
And strive and wrestle with Thee till I die:
O mercy, mercy! wash away my sin.[1]

(1) We are in the world for our own sake. We are placed here to be trained for another and a higher life. A certain time and certain trials upon this earth are necessary to develop us into the likeness of God's character.

¶ The aloe takes a hundred years to make a flower, the primrose a few spring days; some trees reach maturity in half a century, others weave their strength of folded fibres out of the rain, and wind, and sunshine of a thousand years. Each has its own period. It is so, also, with us, the planting of the Lord. A few trials, a few years, and some of us flower into all the perfection we can attain on earth. Many long years' bitter and protracted trials are the lot of others, before a single blossom can spring upon their lives; but—and it is a law which ought to console us—in proportion to the length of time and the greatness of the trial is the fitness of the character for work, and the greatness also of the work that it has to do. The primrose is beautiful and cheers the heart of the passing traveller, and rejoices the Maying children who weave it in a wreath for their queen—and that is useful and lovely work and has its place. But the oak shelters a thousand herds, and plants a forest; and builds the bulwark of the coast, and the fleets that unite the nations. We have no right to be impatient if God is making us into the heart of oak, which will, when the woodman, death, has felled us, give shelter and bring blessing to thousands in the other world. Not an hour of the time, not a single agony of the trial is lost; everything that we suffer here is transmuted otherwhere into strength and usefulness, into greatness and beauty of character.[2]

[1] C. Jerdan, *For the Lambs of the Flock*, 122.
[2] S. A. Brooke, *The Ship of the Soul*, 43.

(2) It is Christ's mind that His people should abide for a season in the world for the sake of others. He has purposes to accomplish in His people, and by them, which render it necessary that they should, in all ordinary cases, pass a time of sojourn amid the cares and temptations of the world. We are not left in doubt as to the reason of our Lord's declining to pray that His saints should be taken out of the world. He explains it Himself in verse 18: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." We know what Christ was sent into the world to do. It was that He might save it. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." In like manner Christ's people are sent into the world for the world's good. In the humbler fashion, which alone is competent to men, Christ's people are like Christ Himself, the light of the world. Christ's plan is to do the work of His Kingdom on the earth by means of His own people. He does not send angels from heaven to preach the Gospel, or to minister food and raiment to the poor, or to comfort mourners, or to put evildoers to shame by their holy life. These honourable functions it is His will and pleasure that His own people should discharge. When the world shall have been converted to Christ, it will be found that the instruments employed have been men of like passions with others. And this being so, it is easy enough to understand why Christ does not desire that His people should be at once taken out of the world. The world needs their example, their prayers, their good deeds, their instructions; and, for the world's sake, they must abide here for a season, and not only abide on the earth, but throw themselves heartily into the throng and turmoil of life in the world, according as God may call them.

¶ For thousands of years there lay before man all the possibilities of insulating an electric current, and so of confining it within certain bounds, and of directing its energy into a definite channel, and yet the thing never dawned upon his mind until the time of Stephen Gray. And since his day the development of electrical science has been proportionate to the progress made in the knowledge of insulation. In all the advance made in the arts and sciences by the nations of antiquity, we have no evidence that any one of them ever discovered that a wire could be so covered that it would be insulated, and so retain and transmit a current; and without this knowledge of insulation no progress in electricity

was possible. An induction coil could not be constructed, and so there could be no dynamo or electric motor. In short, there could be no transmission of electrical energy in any form. Insulation is as much a matter of necessity in things spiritual as in things electrical. This does not mean, however, the insulation which is found in isolation so much as that which is the product of life. It is not secured by separating one's self from his fellows, whether in the cell of the monastery or in the religious retreat. It is rather the possession of life that shields a man from his hostile environment, and enables him to triumph over it.[1]

2. The spirit of Christ's prayer was the habit of His life. If He was not of this world, it was not because He left it to itself, or wrapped Himself in any mystery, or was without sympathy for any human condition, or untouched by any cry of emotion. He lived as a man among men. He assumed no special sanctity, no signs of separation. He sat at rich men's tables. He associated with those of evil repute and of no repute. He said of Himself that He came eating and drinking. It was charged against Him that He was "gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." He gave currency Himself to the coarse reproach that He was "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber," not fearing to take it up, and only adding, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." For he who cannot pass blamelessly through the common conditions of our life, taking them as they are, and evading none of them, is no saint of God and no saviour of men. It is not being above any human necessity, but meeting it fully and purely, that tests spiritual power. If the Son of Man was not of the world, it was not because His spirit was not large enough to take in both earth and heaven; it was because this earth was a sacred place where God was unfolding His providence and men were fulfilling their preparatory destinies; and when He looked upon them in the light of their immortality, His tenderness flowed out even in tears —not the tears that lie near to the eyes, but out of the anguish of His spirit—for those who, in the crisis of the world's opportunity, were rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, not knowing the time of their visitation.

¶ It is said of every painting that has no clear outlook to the sky, that it leaves a stifling impression on the mind of confinement and limitation. And so of every human life that has no natural

[1] C. H. Tyndall, *Electricity and its Similitudes*, 114.

outlet to the infinite: it is then of the world, and of the world only. Yet we have no external measurements for such states of the spirit. Only the individual conscience, and He who is greater than the conscience, can tell where worldliness prevails, with the heavenly outlook closed. Each heart must answer for itself, and at its own risk. That our souls are committed to our own keeping at our own peril, in a world so mixed as this, is the last reason why we should slumber over the charge, or betray the trust. If only that outlet to the infinite is kept open, the inner bond with eternal life preserved, while not one movement of this world's business is interfered with, not one pulse-beat of its happiness repressed, with all natural associations dear and cherished, with all human sympathies fresh and warm, we shall yet be near to the Kingdom of heaven, within the order of the Kosmos of God in the world, but not of the world—not taken out of it, but kept from its evil.[1]

¶ It was a true inspiration of the artist who depicted a monk at his desk in the monastery cell, with pen in hand, and eyes looking upward for illumination, and the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove to bring the light and guidance he sought. That was a true inspiration; but it was equally true to depict a foul spirit speaking from beneath, seeking to engage the monk's attention, that he might whisper in his ear the corrupt and corrupting counsel of the world. In convent and in the busiest highway the two voices call, and no withdrawal of the body will deliver us from the subtle and ensnaring influence of the evil world.[2]

3. The more we make of this life, the more credible another life becomes. The greater this life is made, the easier to believe in the next. No one would infer Paradise from the vast African desert. It is when the traveller visits European zones, sees their magnificence of verdure and bloom and the grand creations of man, that the soul readily believes in God and eternity.

¶ A noted novelist has said that when the great and pure souls of earth were beheld it was easy to believe in immortality. We have suffered from two causes—from religious zealots disparaging this world, and from infidel minds underrating the next. The former take from this beautiful world its purpose, while the latter deprive it of the mystery and the hope of Heaven. Christ has delivered us from both. For He stood forth emphasizing the

[1] J. Hamilton Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, 311.
[2] J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, 57.

value of this life and assigning to His disciples their place in it as His servants. He taught them their obligation to ornament and develop this world. This earth is the first stage in the soul's career. Only a grand human life can bear any adequate testimony to the truths of Christ's Gospel. Here it is given to those accepting it to show its relation to the State; to the social charities human misery makes so needful; to the school, with its eager young life to be trained; to the home, wherein are to blossom the graces and amenities that alone can perpetuate it and make it "sweet home"; to politics, that they may be cleansed and reveal the spirit of that patriotism whose renaissance is the hope of the hour. It is at such points as these, where Christianity has touched this earth and made it better, that it finds its protection from the ice of unbelief and the attacks of ridicule.[1]

II.

The Enemy.

1. The Greek word that ends the text is an adjective, preceded by an article, and being in the genitive case the custom is to supply a substantive. Hence the rendering: "that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." The statement then points to "the prince of this world," the author and embodiment of evil. Not that the word "Satan," or the word "Devil," must always be taken to mean one spirit in the Scriptures: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," means that Christ saw evil spirits discomfited. "The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," means, not one fallen spirit merely, but many fallen spirits seeking whom they may influence for evil.

2. What, then, is this evil (or "evil one," as the R.V. has it) from which our Lord prays we should be kept? Does it consist in outward tribulation, in the trials and troubles of life, in poverty, bereavements, bodily sufferings? Obviously not. Christ knew that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. He Himself, as Perfect Man, underwent all these, leaving us the one perfect example of patient submission to God's will. It was indeed for this purpose that He left His Father's throne to come and live amongst us on this earth, that there might be no thorny path or

[1] M. M. G. Dana.

barren wilderness of trouble which He as our great Leader had not passed through before us, no fierce temptation which He as Perfect Man had not experienced and triumphed over, thus leaving us an example that we should follow His steps, and in all these things be more than conquerors. So then this evil from which He prays God to keep us is not an outward one, but one far more deadly and subtle—an inward and spiritual enemy. He prays that we may be kept from the wiles of the evil one, who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour, from any indulged sin that would come between us and God, from any earthly care or pleasure that may deaden our spiritual faculties and separate the soul from the enjoyment of God's love.

(1) There is *virtue* in environment. In the region of the Natural Sciences we find the botanist and the biologist arguing that any peculiar formation or growth in plant or animal which maintains itself and becomes persistent must be accounted for by something in its environment. There must be something there to justify it, to make it worth while that it should exist, otherwise it would not have maintained itself, at least in vigour. They argue thus from the organism to its environment, and set to work to verify their argument by finding that hitherto unsuspected element or process in external nature with which the peculiar formation brings the plant or animal into advantageous correspondence. There is no reason why the argument should not apply with equal force to the invisible spiritual faculties and developments of human nature; the only difference is that in this region it does not from the nature of the case admit of ocular verification.

¶ You have seen a lily floating in the black sullied waters of a foul bog in the country. All about it are foulness and impurity; but amid all the vileness the lily is pure as the white snowflakes that fall from the winter clouds. It floats on the surface of the stained waters, but never takes a stain. It ever holds up its pure face towards God's blue sky, and pours its fragrance all about it, like the incense from the censer of a vestal priestess. So it is possible for a true soul to live in this sinful world, keeping itself unsullied, and breathing out the fragrance of love.[1]

(2) But there is *peril* in environment. Christ does not make light of the dangers which beset His disciples in this world. He

[1] J. R. Miller, *Glimpses through Life's Windows*, 186.

had met the tempter and defeated him, but He knew the craft and cunning with which he lies in wait to deceive, and this prayer is a cry of warning. St. Paul does not underrate our peril: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." The noble and the good of former days unite in declaring that this world is to the servant of Christ an enemy's country. There are the god of this world, the powers of this world, the men of this world, the things of this world—all in their degree fighting against the man who believes in Jesus. As an old writer has said, this world is like a chess-board, you cannot make a move in any direction but the devil instantly sets out some creature to attack you.

¶ Long ago I made a change of habitat from the hill country of western Carolina to what was regarded as a malarious district near the eastern coast. I was warned of the probable consequences to my health, but I laughed at the fears of my friends. I protested that there was nothing in the world the matter with the air. Was I not a chemist? At least, I was so accounted in those days when I filled that chair in a humble college. The air had just the same constituents as were to be found in the hill country—oxygen, nitrogen, vapour of water, and a trace of carbonic acid. And so for two years I laughed at chills and fevers, and then I shook for two months. There was something baneful in the air, even though chemical analysis failed to detect its presence.[1]

III.

The Keeper.

"That thou shouldest keep them." What a wealth of quiet experience there is in the phrase, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out." It is worth while at the beginning of any day to pause to gather so precious a promise. But like many another fair promise it is at the same time a challenge. The God who waits at the door with the offer of companionship, scrutinizes our going forth. We have, as it were, to pass Him to get into the street. He is the sentry who must know our business, and why

[1] P. S. Henson, *The Four Faces*, 233.

we go out, before He can give us safe conduct. The assurance of protection can be tasted only by the man whose daily purpose is in accordance with the will of God, who can give the answer of his Master, that he is about the Father's business.

¶ In China men have conceived of a sleeping Deity. There, lying on his side, with calm face, closed eyes, and head resting upon his hand, is a gilded wooden figure, 30 feet long, and well proportioned. But he does not mind his worshippers. His left arm is resting upon his body, and his bare feet are placed one upon the other. This Buddha is sleeping, while the world goes on. Standing about him are twelve crowned and beautifully dressed images, and in front are the symbols of sacrifice and incense. How unlike Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps!

O strange and wild is the world of men
Which the eyes of the Lord must see—
With continents, islands, tribes and tongues,
With multitudes bond and free!
All kings of the earth bow down to Him,
And yet—He can think on me.

For none can measure the mind of God
Or the bounds of eternity,
He knows each life that has come from Him,
To the tiniest bird and bee,
And the love of His heart is so deep and wide
That it takes in even me.[1]

1. *The disciple cannot keep himself.*—The Saviour did not turn to those who stood round Him and bind them by strong vows to remain faithful when He was gone. He knew their weakness, and He looked away from them to God's strength. It is well for us to know our weakness. We cannot keep ourselves. We have no strength to meet the attack, and no skill to evade it. How will you do? Will you resolve sternly to resist when next you are tempted? Such resolves have been made, as in a soul's agony they have been made, and they have gone down before the fierce onslaught like lead before the blow-pipe, or they have yielded to the gentle wooings and insinuations of the evil one. Be not too confident, that is, not self-confident. St. Peter's brave challenge to man or devil to make him desert his Master was but the prelude to his fall.

[1] Mary E. Allbright.

2. *We are kept by outward restraints*, by commands and prohibitions and providences. It is told of one of the great painters of Italy, that, being engaged upon a fresco inside the dome of a lofty cathedral, and standing on a platform hung more than a hundred feet from the floor, he paused to look at the effect of his work, and, absorbed in his art, kept walking backward for a better view, till, forgetful of danger, he had almost reached the platform's edge, unconscious that two more backward steps would hurl him down to death. A brother artist seeing his danger, but afraid to speak lest a sudden shout should precipitate the fall he was anxious to prevent, seized a brush full of paint and hurled it against the face of the brilliant figure on the dome, completely spoiling the labour of many days. But that saved the painter's life; for, resenting what he thought an insult, and springing forward with a cry, he only then discovered that that had been a friendly act to save him from an awful death. And when God, with a seemingly cruel hand blots out our beautiful visions, and spoils the life-picture that we thought so fair, till we cry out in surprise and anger too, He may be saying with a tender voice, "It was to keep you from falling."

¶ "Don't you think, sir," said a very sincere but simple man, to me, one Sunday, as I was leaving the pulpit of a chapel filled chiefly by the poor, "don't you think that you repeat the Lord's Prayer the wrong way? Don't you think you had better repeat it as our minister repeats it? He always says, 'Leave us not in temptation.' You don't think that God ever leads us into temptation, sir, do you? Had you not better follow our minister's way, sir?" "No," I replied; "I don't think I had better follow your minister's way. I think he had better follow Christ's way and repeat the prayer as Christ taught it. Listen, my friend," I said; "the prayer is clear enough and forcible enough if you will read it through. But you are like some other people that I know, you insist on reading the Bible with your thumb-nail instead of your brains. You stick your thumb-nail into one word on a page and will not see any other word, even on the same page. When you read any other book you allow it to explain itself. You read all adjoining passages, as well as the immediate context; and, above all, you do not ignore the context. You let the book explain itself. Do the same with the Lord's Prayer." "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"; that is, lead us not into temptation that shall overpower us, expose us not to

overmuch trial, trial under which our weakness may sink. Christ does not mean that we are to pray never to be tempted, but only that we may be shielded from temptations too great for our strength; and that we may be delivered from the sin of yielding to the temptation.[1]

3. *We are kept by the vision of pure things.*—In ascending the lofty peaks of the Jungfrau and Monte Rosa, the guides are said to resort not infrequently to the artifice of endeavouring to interest the traveller in the beauty of the lovely flowers growing there, with a view to distract his attention from the fearful abysses which the giddy path overhangs. By a similar device of wisdom and love are the saints preserved as they pursue their perilous way. God establishes their steps by charming their eye with things of beauty, interest, and delectableness, and by filling their heart with the love of them. Home, sweet home, with its pleasantness and pathos; the charm of literature, the miracles of science, the spell of music, the visions of art; the daily round, with its ever fresh solicitudes and satisfactions; the calls of patriotism, the demands of duty, the glow of love, the pleasures of friendship, social service, the abandon of pastimes—these, and many other similar things pertaining to the natural life, when accepted, exercised, and enjoyed in the sunshine of the Lord, constitute our strength and guarantee our peace, despite all the visions of sin, all the allurements of world, flesh, and devil. We are not saved by some unknown magic, but God draws our heart to Himself through the sanctified gifts, situations, and activities which go to the making up of human life.

4. *We are kept by God's strengthening grace in our hearts.*—Not abstraction from the world, but protection from the evil! The deliverance is to be effected, not by the removal of the body, but by the reinforcement of the spirit. Our redemption is to be accomplished, not by changing our locality, but by changing the condition of the heart. The purpose of our Saviour is to perfect us in holiness, not by withdrawing us from all infection, but by making us proof against all disease in the endowment of invincible health. The ideal of aspiring discipleship is to be found not in innocence, with an environment destitute of temptation, but in

[1] T. Cooper, *Plain Pulpit Talk*, 205.

holiness, despite the menacing advances of infection and disease. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one."

¶ As the diver in his bell sits dry at the bottom of the sea, and draws a pure air from the free heavens far above him, and is parted from that murderous waste of green death that clings so closely round the translucent crystal walls, which keep him safe, so we, enclosed in God, shall repel from ourselves all that would overflow to destroy us and our work, and may by His grace lay deeper than the waters some courses in the great building that shall one day rise stately and many-mansioned from out of the conquered waves.

¶ A writer tells of going with a party into a coal mine. On one side of the gangway grew a plant which was perfectly white. The visitors were astonished that there, where the coal dust was continually flying, this little plant should remain so pure and white. A miner took a handful of black coal dust and threw it upon the plant but none adhered. The visitors repeated the experiment, but the coal dust would not cling. There was a wonderful enamel on the folds of the white plant to which the finest perceptible speck would not adhere. Living there, amid clouds of black dust, nothing could stain its snowy whiteness.

5. *We must co-operate with God.*—Indeed the Apostle Jude says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." God's love to us—that is the element within which the keeping of ourselves becomes real keeping, safe keeping, happy keeping. That is the overarching firmament, with its height and breadth of bright infinitude, within which our keeping is kept. We ourselves are to abide within our own poor keeping: yes, and our own poor keeping is to abide within God's tender might of love. The flower is to be environed by the frail globe of glass: the frail globe is to be environed and to be penetrated by the sweet warm sunlight, that comes across the tracks of worlds to illumine our dark atmosphere with safety and life.

¶ If I feel that I am enclosed by the strong ramparts of a fortress-home, there is animating reason why I should guard myself from the lesser hazards that may still encompass me within that home; my keeping of myself is not at an end, but is

only reduced to manageable dimensions. If I be on board a steam-liner, which holds her head before the wildest weather with undaunted majesty, and only fills the air above her bows with the smoke of billows she is shattering in the strong tremor of her power, I have still to care how I mount the companion-way, and pace the deck, and stow my valuables in my cabin. Indeed, it is only when I am secure from wreck or foundering, that all this minor care is of much account.[1]

I rest on Thy unwearied mind;
  Thy planning and Thy love go on,
Nor dost Thou leave me far behind;
  I'm carried to another dawn.

The new day breaks. From earth's old mould
  Fresh flowers grow along my way.
New life is flashed on problems old;
  On ancient life new forces play.

O wondrous, wakeful Warden! When
  The last great nightfall comes to me,
From that deep slumber rouse me then,
  That I Thy tireless child may be.[2]

IV.

The Intercessor.

"I pray."—Jesus assumes the rôle of Advocate. To St. Peter He said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And He says the same to every disciple who is being sifted by the wicked one. Our great High Priest lifts up the voice of continual intercession for us. His own Passion is His Plea. Those five red-lipped wounds plead eloquently with the Father; and nothing that they ask is ever refused.

Look, Father, look on His Anointed Face,
And only look on us as found in Him;
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim.
For lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy Son our Lord.

[1] J. A. Kerr Bain, *For Heart and Life*, 85.
[2] Archibald Haddon.

¶ I remember a wonderful mural painting. It depicts the Jews brought into subjection to the heathen. To the left stands Pharaoh, exquisite, effeminate, deadly cruel. In one hand he lifts the scourge, and with the other he grasps the hair of the captives. On the right is the Assyrian king, duller, heavier, with knotted limbs. He presses down the yoke on the poor prisoners. But supplicating hands are raised up to heaven, and Jehovah lends His ear to the cry of His people. The cherubim fly before Him, their wings a glowing crimson. They hide His face; but from behind the wings issue His arms. The slender Pharaoh He represses by the mere impact of His fingers. The brute force of the Assyrian He holds in a grasp of tremendous power. Fear not, O trembling heart: when Jesus presents your prayers before the throne, no enemy can prevail against you.[1]

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 34.

The Master's Consecration.

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THE MASTER'S CONSECRATION.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.—John xvii. 19.

THE richest, fullest life our earth has ever known was the life of Jesus Christ. No one ever had within himself such complete satisfactions, such assured convictions, and such settled peace as He. Rich and full as His life was to Himself, it was the richest, fullest life to others that has ever blessed humanity. Wherever He went He was the source of helpfulness. Even the hem of His garment had power in it, and from His lips, His hands, His heart went out an unceasing, abounding inspiration to the souls of men. Jesus Christ was a great fountain whose waters of comfort welled up like a flood within His own heart, and then flowed forth full-volumed to cheer the world. His life had more in it and gave more from it than any other life since time began. What was the secret of it? He sanctified Himself.

¶ When Augustine Thierry, after withdrawing himself from the world, and devoting himself to study, that he might investigate the origin, causes and effects of the successive German invasions, spent six years in poring with the pertinacity of a Benedictine monk over worm-eaten manuscripts, and deciphering and comparing black-letter texts, at last completed his magnificent *History of the Conquest*, he found he had lost his eyesight. The most precious of his senses had been sacrificed to his zeal in literary research. The beauties of nature and the records of scholarship were thenceforth shut out from him; and yet did he think the sacrifice too great? In a letter, written to a friend long afterward, he said: "Were I to begin my life over again, I would choose the road that had led me to where I now am. Blind and afflicted, without hope and without leisure, I can safely offer this testimony, the sincerity of which, coming from a man in my condition, cannot be called in question. There is something in the world worth more than pleasure, more than fortune, more

than health itself. I mean devotion, self-dedication to a great end." There is a higher end than scientific research, and to that end Jesus Christ dedicated Himself.

¶ In the instructive and profound book on *The Religion of the Semites*, Dr. Robertson Smith quotes, as containing the deepest conception of the Atonement, these words of our Lord, uttered as He knelt in prayer by the altar of the supreme sacrifice: "For their sakes I consecrate myself, that they themselves also may be consecrated in truth." Besson writes in his spiritual letters, "It is in His passion that the Saviour shows Himself, like the sun at midday, in all the ardour of His love." And in the shadow of the cross, He who had schooled Himself daily to the repression of feeling spoke the secret of His life and death. He interpreted His whole work as a consecration in the power of love. On the Cross He consecrated Himself as the atoning sacrifice—the absolute oblation for the sins of the whole world. Here is the first aspect of the Cross; its witness to the deep necessity of expiation, to the completeness of Christ's offering for sin. But this doctrine may be stated with a narrow correctness which leaves a world of unknown feeling behind. Before the death of Christ came His life, and that was a long self-sacrifice. It was willingly surrendered hour by hour till all the years were full. Then it was completed—consummated in death.[1]

I.

The Act of Consecration.

The word "sanctify" is used in the Bible with two distinct significations. The original meaning of the word is to consecrate, to dedicate, to set apart to God and to God's service; and this is its ordinary meaning in the Old Testament. We commonly intend by it, to make holy: sanctity and holiness are the same; sanctification is the growing completeness of the Christian character, the hallowing of the personal life: in this sense the word is often used in the New Testament. Sanctification, in brief, may describe either the purpose or the process of the Christian life.

It is not hard to trace the connexion between these two meanings of the word; to see how the first meaning passes naturally and necessarily into the other. Perfect consecration

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ten-Minute Sermons*, 235.

would be complete and absolute holiness. No purity would be wanting to the motive, no elevation to the character, of one who should be devoted to the Lord his God, with "all his heart, and all his soul, and all his mind, and all his strength." We must lay aside any thought of a native holiness, in man or angel, apart from conformity to God's character and obedience to His will. God alone is holy, in and of Himself; the source of our sanctity, like the spring of our life, is in God. The charm and energy of the personal holiness even of Christ lay in His constant devotion to His Father's will.

This is at once our Lord's life-purpose, and an ideal for us. "I sanctify myself." I am set apart, consecrated, devoted to Thee and to mankind. Consecrated in thought, word and deed: devoted in motive and in action. I am near Thee in my daily life, in my going out and coming in, in my trials as in my triumphs, in my death as in my life. I am like Thee, revealing Thy character; having Thy image stamped on me.

1. *He concealed His greatness and glory.*—The natural dignities of the Son of God had to be hidden from us. John, the beloved disciple, he who knew the Lord more intimately than any other, he who saw most clearly into the depths of that soul, who leaned upon the bosom of the Lord, tells us that he beheld the glory of the Son of God, His face like unto the sun in its strength, His eyes like unto flames of fire;—and John fell at His feet as dead. Thus was it on the Mount of Transfiguration, when for a moment the innate glory of the Son of God shone through the veil that hid it, and His robes were white and glistering, and again His face was like the sun, and again His eyes were like unto flames of fire, and the disciples, blinded and bewildered by such splendour, hid themselves, afraid, and shrank from that excess of light. Think of Him, then, for our sakes setting apart His glory that He might become our Blessed Brother and Friend, and that all might draw near to Him and be at home with Him; sitting down with lowly fishermen, welcoming the outcast, gathering to Himself the little children, drawing around Him all the sad and needy of the earth.

Out of this comes the other great temptation that assails Him. "If Thou art the Son of God, if Thou art not bound by these

laws of humanity, if Thou canst dismay and bewilder Thine enemies by the manifestations of Thy glory, put forth Thy power, assert Thine authority." Think of Him as He stands with outstretched hand rebuking Peter there in the shadow of Gethsemane, in that night, the full moon of the Passover high in the heavens, about Him the rough crowd gathered with swords and staves! Judas has betrayed his Lord with a kiss, and the soldiers step forward to lay their hands upon the Saviour, when Peter draws his sword to fight for the Lord. "Thinkest thou," said Jesus, "that I cannot now pray to my Father and he will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" But He sanctified Himself, setting Himself apart for our sakes.

Think, again, how it met Him on the Cross. From out the crowd that gathered about the city walls, there rings the fierce derision, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Others have suffered perhaps as cruel a martyrdom, others have hung in anguish, mocked and derided; but of all that ever went forth to die, He alone could say, "I lay down my life. No man taketh it from me." This is the glory and triumph of Christ that, conscious of a power which could have achieved so sublime and instant a triumph over all His foes,—His cross transformed into a throne, about Him all His holy angels, and He seated amidst the terrors of judgment summoning these His murderers to His feet, —for our sakes He set Himself apart and hung upon His cross and sunk until there came the final cry, "It is finished."

¶ Is humiliation easy? Was it easy for Christ to humble Himself? Is it easy for us? "There are certain animals," says George Eliot, "to which tenacity of position is a law of life—they can never flourish again, after a single wrench: and there are certain human beings to whom predominance is a law of life—they can only sustain humiliation so long as they can refuse to believe in it, and, in their own conception, predominate still."[1]

¶ Manin, the last doge of Venice, was compelled to swear allegiance to Austria in the name of his compatriots. With a broken heart he made ready for the ceremony, but as he stepped forward at the appointed time to pronounce the fatal words, his strength and his faculties gave way together. He fell senseless at the feet of his foes, and died not long afterward.[2]

[1] George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss.*

[2] W. M. Sloane, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, ii. 24.

2. *He made an absolute surrender of Himself.*—There are times when Egoism can reach its best development only by what would be called a complete surrender of itself to the help of others. There is a tradition that one who desired to produce a fine kind of pottery always failed until he threw himself into the fire that was baking his work, and lo, the effort was now a success, the pottery came forth as he had desired. Egoism submerged in Altruism became perfected Egoism and perfected Altruism at once. So Christ reached an hour in His life when He could not be the most that He ought to be unless He actually laid down His life for others. He would have been a renegade to His own high ideas of nobility of character if He had not been willing to die for mankind. Egoism for its own development needed a prodigal Altruism. The fulness of His own life demanded an outpouring of that life.

¶ I heard sometime since of an oculist who was very fond of cricket. But he had given it up, much as he enjoyed it, for he found that it affected the delicacy of his touch; and for the sake of those whom he sought to relieve he sanctified himself and set himself apart. That is what we want—that there shall come into our lives a force that prompts us always to be at our best and readiest for service, our fullest and richest to help, a tree that is always in leaf and always in bloom and always laden with its fruit, like the orange tree, where the beauty of the blossom meets with its fragrance the mellow glory of the fruit.[1]

¶ There are two great pictures, each of them by a famous artist. One picture represents a woman in a hospital. The woman is a princess, fair and beautiful to look upon, but the hospital is most loathsome, because it is the home of a number of dying lepers, and this fair and beautiful woman is represented as wiping the face of a dying leper. That picture is a symbol of the dignity and the beauty of social service. But there hangs by its side another picture by another great artist. It represents a woman in her oratory. She is in the attitude of prayer. Beside her stands an angel. She is looking over the open pages of the Holy Bible, which are illuminated. And the legend tells us that while she knelt there in that place of prayer, seven times she was interrupted. Seven times there came a call at her door, a demand upon her love, upon her charity—a sevenfold recognition of the needs of her brother man. And seven times, with a patience and

[1] Mark Guy Pearse.

with a moral beauty beyond all description, she goes to the door, relieves these cases of necessity, and returns to her knees, to her attitude of prayer. This is a picture of the supreme dignity and the great worth of personal sanctification.[1]

II.

The Aim of Consecration.

"I sanctify myself,"—that is the starting-point of redemption. "For their sakes,"—that is the end, the common good, the social welfare. The beginning is individual, the aim is social. The way to make a good world is, first of all, to be good oneself. First character, then charity; first life, then love;—that was the way of Jesus Christ. He does not stand in history as the great organizer or reformer of the social world. He stands primarily as the witness of the capacity for social service offered to each human soul. The Kingdom of God, which is the end of endeavour, is to come through the personal sanctification of individuals for the sake of others. The Christian paradox is the paradox of the solar system. An isolated soul, like an isolated planet, means instability and chaos. The stability of each part is found in its steady orbit round the larger centre, and the integrity of the whole vast order hangs on the adjustment of each single part. That is what is known in the world of nature as the law of attraction, and what Jesus calls in the spiritual world the Kingdom of God.

¶ The mother consecrates herself for her infant. She devotes herself in self-forgetting love. The motive is strong, the strongest we know—mother-love. This emotion throbbing in the mother-heart finds expression in a thousand acts of loving care; but the child grows up and needs a mother's care less; still the care subsists. Some mythical relation arising out of motherhood seems to grow up in the mother's heart which delights in self-giving. The average mother has it, without any special gifts of intellect. The exceptional mother controls this natural emotion by foresight and educated taste. It is only the unnatural mother that has it not. And yet, though it is common, it is never learned from the outside. It springs up instinctively in answer to the infant's need.

[1] O. W. Whittaker.

It is spontaneous and almost unthinking, and yet it is the most beautiful love in life, for it gives all and asks nothing. What a lyric life becomes to the mother in her joy! Her thoughts run to poetry and her horizon is filled with her helpless child. It is all the world to her. Something of this mother-love there must be in all consecration. We must love some one, some community, some race, in self-abandoning, self-effacing love before we can consecrate ourselves for their sakes. This is one standard of our capacity for such an enterprise. Can we love others better than ourselves so as to serve them? Otherwise the service will at the moment of pressure seem to us less important and less demanding than our own comfort and we shall throw it up in petulance or despair.[1]

¶ Dante, writing his poetry, never forgot Beatrice. He perfected that poetry in thought, in word, in spirit, in movement, hoping that it would receive public recognition and bring him honour. But he perfected it and sought recognition and honour because burning in his soul was love for his idealized Beatrice, at whose shrine and to whose praise he intended to offer all the recognition and honour that he might possibly win. Beatrice was a vision beckoning him on to industry and skill. In a far holier, higher way Christ had His beckoning vision. It was the whole world that beckoned Him to endeavour and development. Perhaps from that hill behind Nazareth He watched the ships of all nations going up and down the Mediterranean, and the world with all its kingdoms stood out before His thought. Certain it is that when the hour of temptation came to Him, and all the kingdoms of the world were made to pass before Him, He recognized them, and they appealed to Him because He had thought of them so often, so lovingly, so devotedly. Yes, the supreme vision of Christ was "others." Never at any period of His life was He without it. He unrolled the scroll of the Scriptures, and what He read was that He should open the door to the imprisoned, should bind up the broken-hearted, and should give deliverance to the enslaved. He used saw and hammer in the shop, making box, wheel, or door, and His eyes, His thought, His being, could not stop with them; His vision was peering far out into all the earth, and He was seeing thousands upon thousands of hearts appealing to Him for help.[2]

1. For us, as for Christ, sanctification is *separation for use.*—It is in this sense that our Lord immediately goes on to say, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." To sanctify is to set apart. "The Lord hath

[1] *Alexander Tomory*, 66. [2] James G. K. McClure, *Loyalty*, 214.

set apart him that is godly for himself" (Ps. iv. 3). In this sense the vessels of the Temple and of the Tabernacle were sanctified when they were set apart for a holy use. In this thought of separation the idea of the intrinsic character of the person or thing sanctified does not come into view in the first instance. Our Lord Himself, being perfectly holy, needed no moral renovation, but He did need to be set apart, to be devoted to the performance of the Father's will. "For their sakes I sanctify myself," that is, I set myself apart to do always the things that please Him. He came upon earth as a servant. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (vi. 38). He came as separated unto God, not in any spirit of Pharisaism, but in the spirit of whole-hearted devotion. He came to do but one thing—"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (iv. 34), and this high aim is certainly, by virtue of his calling, also set before every Christian.

¶ In the wonderful system of the telephone the whole complex communication depends at each point on the little film of metal which we call a transmitter. Take that little disk out of the mechanism, and it becomes insignificant and purposeless: but set the transmitter where it belongs, in the wonderful mechanism of the greater system, and each word that is spoken into it is repeated miles and miles away. So stands the individual in the vast system of the providence of God. He is a transmitter. Taken by himself, what can be more insignificant than he? Yet, at each point the whole system depends on the transmissive power of the individual life. It takes its place in the great order, saying to itself, "For their sakes I sanctify myself"; and then, by the miracle of the Divine method, each vibration of the insignificant but sanctified life reaches the needs which are waiting for its message far away.[1]

2. The next element is *purification*.—It follows almost without saying that if you set apart a person or a thing to the service of an absolutely holy God, anything that defiles that person or thing renders it unfit for God's use, and hence, though the first meaning of the word is separation, it speedily "acquires," as Archbishop Trench in his work on the New Testament synonyms points out, "a moral significance"; thus the thought of purification is added to the fundamental idea of separation. If I want to separate a

[1] F. G. Peabody, *Sunday Evenings in the College Chapel*, 250.

cup to God's service, and that cup is polluted, I must not only set it apart for God's use, I must separate it from the pollution that is in it. Thus separation involves the idea of the removal of a defilement which is inconsistent with holy use. If I am to be separated to God, and sanctified for God's service, it is not enough that I should be set apart without any reference to my intrinsic character. The character itself must be purified from the defilement which makes it unfit to be used in a holy service. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. ii. 21). Thus we see that the deeper thought of the moral and spiritual renovation follows close upon the first great meaning of separation, and in fact springs out of it.

¶ Henry Drummond never said a truer thing than when he declared that what God wanted was not more of us, but a better brand. We need the perfecting of holiness for the perfecting alike of our usefulness and of our happiness. According to the Divine ordination, holiness and happiness are evermore inseparable. This is the secret of the bliss of heaven. And in proportion as holiness is cherished in the heart and practised in the life, will the new Jerusalem come down from God out of heaven.

The men of grace have found
Glory begun below,
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.[1]

3. *Transformation.*—The purification is followed by a gradual transformation into the image of Christ. "Sanctify them in the truth." "The truth" is not only the element in which we are to live, but the element into which we are to be transformed. The purposed end of the truth is not that we may find wisdom, but that we may gain holiness. That is to be the Christian distinctiveness; we are to be clothed in the garb of truth, and the world is to recognize, by our moral garments, that we are the kinsmen of the Lord. And in order that we may attain to this spiritual beauty, it is needful that we take our individual powers and deliberately separate them and dedicate them unto the truth. We must have a consecration service, and devote our reason to the

[1] P. S. Henson, *The Four Faces*, 226.

truth. And we must have a consecration service, and devote our affections and our will. And the powers of the second rank must not be allowed to remain in assumed inferiority or defilement. Our imaginations must be devoted to the truth, and so must our language, and so must our humour. Every faculty and function in our life must be set apart to the clean, beautiful, beautifying truth, as revealed to us in our Saviour by His promised Spirit.

¶ A Connecticut farmer came to a well-known clergyman, saying that the people in his neighbourhood had built a new meeting-house, and that they wanted this clergyman to come and dedicate it. The clergyman, accustomed to participate in dedicatory services where different clergymen took different parts of the service, inquired:

"What part do you want me to take in the dedication?"

The farmer, thinking that this question applied to the part of the building to be included in the dedication, replied:

"Why, the whole thing! Take it all in, from underpinning to steeple."

That man wanted the building to be wholly sanctified as a temple of God, and that all at once. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"[1]

(1) *We reach our best by devoting ourselves to the interests of others.*—I am my best, not simply for myself, but for the world. Is there anything in all the teachings that man has had from his fellow-man, all that has come down to him from the lips of God, that is nobler, that is more far-reaching than this, that I am to be my best not simply for my own sake, but for the sake of that world which, by being my best, I shall make more complete, I shall, according to my ability, renew and recreate in the image of God? That is the law of my existence. And the man that makes that the law of his existence neglects neither himself nor his fellow-men; he neither becomes the self-absorbed student and cultivator of his own life upon the one hand, nor does he become, abandoning himself, simply the wasting benefactor of his brethren upon the other. I watch the workman build upon the building which by and by is to soar into the skies, to toss its pinnacles up to the heaven, and I see him looking up and wondering where those pinnacles are to be, thinking how high they are to be, measuring the feet, wondering how they are to be built, and all

[1] H. Clay Trumbull, *Our Misunderstood Bible*, 115.

the time he is cramming a rotten stone into the building just where he has set to work. Let him forget the pinnacles, if he will, or hold only the floating image of them in his imagination for his inspiration; but the thing that he must do is to put a brave, strong soul, an honest and substantial life into the building just where he is now at work.

¶ David Livingstone longed for knowledge and for purity of soul. He sought to be an astronomer, and a chemist, and a botanist, and a geographer. He surveyed lands and built houses and steered boats. He laboured to know languages and obtain power among barbarians. How glad he was of recognition in England, and how he valued everything that men called success! But why did he value them? That he might heal that open sore of the world, Africa; that he might be able to call attention to Africa, and bring beneficent aid to Africa, and sanctify Africa. The more he sanctified himself, yes, the larger man he became in his possession of truth, power, and purity, the more Africa lay upon his heart and the deeper in his soul rang the needs of the dark continent. When, with the early daylight, his servants coming into his room found him dead upon his knees beside his bed, they saw the perfected sanctification of Livingstone expressed in his actually dying for others.[1]

(2) *We remain at our worst by dedicating ourselves to self.*—A man may dedicate himself to a hundred things, but there is one thing to which he must not dedicate or re-dedicate self. He must be sure that he is not dedicating self to self. If he dedicates self to self he will not so soon awake, as we are sometimes told a man will, to bitter disappointment. For the more remarkable the powers are which he once dedicates to self, the more remarkable will he make the self to which they are dedicated, the more apparently worthy of the dedication will he become both to himself and to others. We do not see self-admiration diminish with years, with disappointments, or with knowledge of the world. It may, indeed, continue along with such high gifts and noble qualities that it seems the one fault in the man. But it is fatal.

¶ It was to Croesus that Solon said, in the midst of all Croesus's wealth and power and wisdom (and powerful and wise Croesus was as well as wealthy), "Count no man happy before he

[1] James G. K. McClure, *Loyalty*, 223.

dies." And it was the same Croesus who on his own funeral pyre, having lost children and kingdom and home, called out the single word "Solon! Solon!" and thus declared that Solon was right, and that happiness could not be secured by things selfish. Christ Himself could not have been happy even in being spotless, except as He used His spotlessness for the benefit of others.

(3) *The spring of all our activities must be devotion to Christ.*—"For their sakes," said Jesus. "For His sake," say we. That is our inspiration. The life of complete surrender is in Him and in Him alone. To know Him, to commune with Him, to rest in His love, to have and hold it as our own—that is the secret of the surrendered life.

Just to give up, and trust
  All to a Fate unknown,
Plodding along life's road in the dust,
  Bounded by walls of stone;
Never to have a heart at peace;
Never to see when care will cease;
  Just to be still when sorrows fall—
  This is the bitterest lesson of all.

Just to give up, and rest
  All on a Love secure,
Out of a world that's hard at the best,
  Looking to heaven as sure;
Ever to hope, through cloud and fear,
In darkest night, that the dawn is near;
  Just to wait at the Master's feet—
  Surely, now, the bitter is sweet.[1]

III.

The Instrument of Consecration.

1. The Truth is the great sanctifier. There is no ray of truth that ever came from the Father of lights that does not hallow the heart on which it falls. It is not make-believes that will give you sanctity. There is a falsetto character about all piety resting upon make-believes. But Truth—every ray of it, is

[1] Henry van Dyke.

blessing. See God, the infinite Father, the Alpha and Omega of whose being is Love, love so infinite and inconceivable that it embraces every individual soul of man, with a desire to save and bless it; see Him in the graciousness of His providence, in the majesty of His rule, and every attribute you behold engages your love, quickens your trust, brings you near, makes you wish to serve Him, makes you His and like Him. The truth in God sanctifies. The truth in Christ, in His work, love, patience, humanity, Godhead, intercession, the everlasting purpose of His heart, is all of it quickening. The truth in man is a sanctifying thing. Fear no truth. All nervousness that dreads inquiry, all apprehensiveness of the result of modern investigations, is unbelief and mistake. Nothing that is true will displace a quickening influence for good without giving a more quickening influence still. "Sanctify them through thy truth." Every error of life springs from an error of thought. A lie is the root of all evil—some misconception or misunderstanding. Truth of providence, truth of the rewards of goodness, truth of grace, truth of immortality, truth of God and man—every ray of it is quickening.

¶ *In the truth*, and not simply through the truth. The Truth is, as it were, the atmosphere, the element, in which believers are immersed and by which they are sustained: and we must think of the Truth in the widest sense in which we can conceive of it. Such Truth, which Christ is, and which Christ reveals, is everywhere about us: it corresponds with the whole range of present experience: it is realized in a personal communion with its Source. Its function is not simply to support but to transfigure. Its issue is not knowledge but holiness.[1]

2. "Thy word is truth."—This leads us directly to the Bible and the Bible tends to make men saints, because it describes the lives and experiences of many who have lived near to God, and who have cared intensely for men. And we *take fire* by the things we read; as it has been said, "If you read Shakespeare, after a while you think Shakespeare and you talk Shakespeare."

¶ "Thy word is truth." Thy word, written and unwritten, Thy word in the Bible, in nature, in history, in experience. We dare not limit either the time or the manner of His utterance. Forms of thought, the organization of the State, the relations

[1] B. F. Westcott, *The Incarnation and Common Life*, 176.

of the sciences vary, and He meets our changing position with appropriate teaching. His message comes to each age and to each people as it came at Pentecost, in their own language. It comes to us through the struggles of the nations and the movements of society, through every fact that marks one least step in the method of creation or in the history of man. It is this message, given to us in our language, that we have to welcome and to interpret now. Only so will our personal consecration be perfected: only so will our social office be fulfilled.[1]

(1) The Word has a *discovering* and *enlightening* power. It is a mirror in which we see reflected our failures and sins; it is a searchlight discerning the very thoughts and intents of the heart.

¶ A late postmaster in London gave a poor Roman Catholic woman a Testament. The priest visiting her on her dying bed found it beneath her pillow as she passed away, and took it with him, intending to destroy it. But it was found beneath *his* pillow likewise when he died, not long after.[2]

(2) It has a *cleansing* and *purifying* power. We are very much influenced by what we read.

¶ We are informed that the wretched man who took the life of President Carnot lived an apparently harmless, decent life for a good many years, until he came into contact with anarchist publications, which so saturated his mind with evil thoughts, schemes, and ideas that at length he was capable of the awful crime he committed. He was defiled, ruined, and destroyed by the word of falsehood which he read. It has again and again been shown in courts of justice that thieves and robbers have had the thoughts of such a life put into their heads by the tales of highwaymen and the like which are sown broadcast in print. The same principle holds true conversely, and it holds good with regard to the Word of God. The Bible has a sanctifying influence: it is a holy book—it sets before us holy examples, it exhorts us to a holy course of life, it furnishes us with holy doctrines, it points us to a holy Saviour.[3]

(3) The Word has a *nourishing* and *strengthening* power. We are told that as new-born babes we are to desire the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow thereby. And the Apostle says, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is

[1] B. F. Westcott, *The Incarnation and Common Life*, 187.
[2] *Homiletic Review*, xxi. 158.
[3] E. Moore, *Christ in Possession*, 74.

able to build you up" (Acts xx. 32). There is a vital link between the written word and the Living Word, and when the word of God dwells in us, Christ comes and dwells in us too. The secret of sanctification is an indwelling Saviour.

No distant Lord have I
Loving afar to be;
Made flesh for me, He cannot rest
Until He rests in me.

Brother in joy and pain,
Bone of my bone was He,
Now,—intimacy closer still,
He dwells Himself in me.

I need not journey far
This dearest friend to see,
Companionship is always mine,
He makes His home with me.[1]

[1] Maltbie D. Babcock.

The Kingdom of Truth.

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The Kingdom of Truth.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?—John xviii. 37, 38.

1. Jesus was on trial for His life on a charge of sedition in claiming to be a king. The charge was expressed in the question, "Art thou a king then?" His answer to this charge was a puzzle to His judge. His kingdom was not of this world, and yet it was to be supreme and universal. Pilate could understand an authority which was enforced by Roman legions, and maintained by Roman bribes, but could not comprehend his prisoner when He rested His claims simply upon the truth to which He was to bear witness. "'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." The severe assurance of the prisoner brings into bold relief the frivolous scepticism of the judge. It would almost seem that in the two were represented the extremes of modern thought and character.

2. They were standing face to face in the splendid hall of a palace in Jerusalem. It was adorned with vessels of gold and silver: the floor was of rich mosaic, the columns were of many-coloured marble. The speaker was a Roman Governor, seated on his tribunal in all his pomp. On either side were the Roman soldiers, in full armour, with spear and shield. Behind his gilded chair stood the lictors with their fasces. Politically, he represented the mightiest power on all the earth—the power of Imperial Rome. Personally, he wielded an almost irresponsible despotism. Before him, worn and wasted, His visage marred more than any man—the agony of long hours of struggle, and torment, and sleeplessness in His eyes, the marks of blows and insult on His face—stood a Jewish prisoner. His hands were bound behind His back; His garb was the humble dress of a

Galilean peasant. The burning sunlight of an early Syrian spring streamed through the lattices, and the deep silence which hangs over an Eastern city at early dawn would ordinarily have been broken only by the plashing of fountains in the green spaces of the garden, or by the cooing of innumerable doves which sunned their white bosoms over the marble colonnades. It was broken now by far other sounds. The voices of the two speakers were almost drowned by the savage yells of a Jewish mob—all raging against that toil-worn prisoner, all demanding that the Roman Governor should shed His blood.

¶ On the north-east of the Temple in Jerusalem, in menacing attitude, stood the great Herodian Citadel called, after Mark Antony, Turris Antonia. The perpendicular sides of the hill on which this palatial fortress was reared were faced with polished marble so as to defy all attempts to scale its walls. On the platform immediately above this impregnable rampart was planted the square-built Citadel itself. At each angle of it there shot up a tower, the one to the south side being conspicuous by a turret from which the Roman garrison, much to the annoyance of the priests, could command an unbroken view of the interior of the Holy Temple. To render this marble camp an abode suitable for the Roman Governor in times of danger, Herod had built, on a lower platform hewn out of the living rock, a sumptuous residence, embodying Grecian taste and Oriental luxury. The praetorium, of which the Gospel speaks, was approached on its western side through an open court or forum, leading to a noble Roman archway flanked by two others on a smaller scale. This triple archway opened into an area paved with red flagstones, called by Greeks, Lithostrotos, and by Jews, Gabbatha. Here at right angles with the archway stood the white marble Tribune or Bema from which the Governor was wont to administer justice. Beyond it sprang a grand staircase sloping up to the balcony or loggia sweeping to the right and left of the Governor's hall. From this point Pilate probably surveyed the accusers of Jesus.[1]

I.

The Kingdom of Truth.

Truth is a kingdom. It is the kingdom of the Spirit. Its Divine authority was distinctly enunciated by Jesus in reply to

[1] B. Vaughan, *Society, Sin and the Saviour*, 89.

Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world," therefore its sway is inevitable, its passage cannot be prevented. Men may try to distort its outlines, but its essential power they cannot control. It does not change with the political boundaries or military dominance of earth's kingdoms. "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." Kings cannot prevent its growth. Your Cæsar shall be forgotten, and his throne overturned—while My Kingdom shall be spreading over the world and absorbing all other kingdoms. Priests cannot defile it, however much they may seek to interpret truth for their own ends. When the ecclesiastics brought Jesus to Pilate, they would not enter into the palace themselves, "lest they should be defiled"—and the Passover was yet to be eaten. It was an admission from false ceremonialism of its own weakness. The living truth had gone out of their system; they had only the outward forms to rely upon, and they did not dare relinquish one of these, for they had no other authority.

The answer Christ gave to Pilate suggests the best reply to the question, "What did Christ mean by the Kingdom of God." He was king, He said, in the kingdom of the truth, meaning thereby not a mere dogma, but the truth of God and the truth of man. The kind of power which He here claims is spiritual power, and that is the greatest that can be swayed. For it is spiritual power —true or false—that determines history, shapes the character of society, directs the tendencies of life, the movements of the world. There are uncrowned kings who have swayed the destinies of mankind as no leaders of armies have been able to sway them. There have been poets and teachers who have inspired enthusiasms and kindled hopes that have moved the world, for they have reigned over the domain of human thought and so determined the actions of mankind. There have been kings on other thrones than those of State who have been the real monarchs of humanity, —Gutenberg with his printing-press, Bacon with his inductive method, Isaac Newton, James Watt. What a wide domain of conquest the very mention of these names suggests. May we not say with truth that if we are to find the influences which have given power to any of the great epochs of the world, we must look not to the brute force which was called into exercise, but to the ideas which gave nerve to the arms that wielded the force?

Wherein, for example, lay the power of the armies of revolutionary France? Not surely in the number of her soldiers or in the genius of her commanders alone. These countless battalions marched with songs of joy against a world in arms because every heart there was stirred with the sense of a grand cause. It was the charmed words Liberty, Equality, Fraternity that excited their enthusiasm into a fierce world-conquering fanaticism. So is it that the true kingdoms which govern men are not those which strike the eye. They do not excite observation. They are the kingdoms of human conviction, thought, aspiration, passion. It is in the sphere of ideas, in the domain of the affections, in the faiths, the hopes, the loves which sway humanity, that we discover the real forces of the world. And so it was that Christ touched the true fountain of all power when He refused to use the forces which the world imagines omnipotent, when He left Cæsar on the throne and Pilate in the praetorium, and said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight but my kingdom is not from hence. For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

1. *The kingdom of truth is wide in extent.*—The truth to which Christ bore witness at the first was the truth which concerned His person, and His claims to the love and obedience of men. On the cross He bore witness to the love of God for sinning man. By rising from the dead, and ascending to His Father, He testified that He was indeed the Son of God. By His present spirit He has witnessed ever since for the living God as against the godlessness and self-worship to which man is prone. To the truth which enforces the duties of men, Christ also bore witness, first by His spotless and inspiring life, by His penetrating and faithful words, and then by the long succession of obedient disciples who have imitated the one and exemplified the other.

There is, however, truth of other descriptions than the truth which we call religious and ethical. There is the truth of science, which is expanded every year into grander proportions; the truth of letters, which is more and more abundant and instructive; and the truth of the imagination, which is more and more varied and inspiring. Has Christ any testimony to give concerning these

kinds of truth? Does Christ hold any relations to Science, Letters, or Art? And, if so, what are these relations? We believe that they are many and important. We also hold that the spirit of earnest discipleship to Christ always favours, and often inspires, the highest achievements in every one of these forms of truth. We hold not only that Christianity satisfies the wants of which the scholar is conscious as a man, but that it is equally efficient and equally essential in stimulating and guiding him rightly as a scholar. In other words, we contend that allegiance to Christ is a favouring, and in one sense an essential, condition of the best human culture and education.

¶ I notice that among all the new buildings which cover your once wild hills, churches and schools are mixed in due, that is to say, in large proportion, with your mills and mansions; and I notice also that the churches and schools are almost always Gothic, and the mansions and mills are never Gothic. May I ask the meaning of this? for, remember, it is peculiarly a modern phenomenon. When Gothic was invented, houses were Gothic as well as churches; and when the Italian style superseded the Gothic, churches were Italian as well as houses. If there is a Gothic spire to the Cathedral of Antwerp, there is a Gothic belfry to the Hôtel de Ville at Brussels; if Inigo Jones builds an Italian Whitehall, Sir Christopher Wren builds an Italian St. Paul's. But now you live under one school of architecture, and worship under another. What do you mean by doing this? Am I to understand that you are thinking of changing your architecture back to Gothic: and that you treat your churches experimentally, because it does not matter what mistakes you make in a church? Or am I to understand that you consider Gothic a pre-eminently sacred and beautiful mode of building, which you think, like the fine frankincense, should be mixed for the tabernacle only, and reserved for your religious services? For if this be the feeling, though it may seem at first as if it were graceful and reverent, at the root of the matter, it signifies neither more nor less than that you have separated your religion from your life.[1]

2. *It is a conquering kingdom.*—"Magna est veritas et praevalet." Like the magnificent palace of the Incas of Cuzco, the ancient imperial city of Peru, whose ponderous stones were united by seams of melted gold, the whole social fabric is cemented by this pure and durable element, without which the noble

[1] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olives* (*Works*, xviii. 440).

structure would soon totter to its fall. Falsehood makes war with God's grandest attribute, as manifested in heaven and earth, but this attribute must ultimately triumph to vindicate the glory of His reign.

Truth, crush'd to earth, shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers:
While Error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies amid his worshippers.

¶ Many moral victories that we want to see won in the world can be won only when we are gone; but let us make our contribution, and others will carry on the struggle. Captain Urquhart, dying in the Battle of Atbara, in the Soudan, said to the men who were attending him, "Never mind me, lads, go on!" Inspired with the worth of the cause and the importance of his army's victory, he could forget his pain and give up his life, and tell the others to go on. We have a more important battle to fight—we must carry on the war of God against all wrong—and every soldier that falls must inspire the others to go on.[1]

3. *Its progress is secured by sacrifice.*—Christ's throne is a Cross. The throne of this king was not like that of Solomon, with its golden lions and ivory steps; not like the jewelled throne of Byzantium, or the peacock throne of the Moguls. It was the throne of sorrow; it was the throne of awful self-sacrifice. "By this conquer" gleamed around that Cross in the vision of Constantine; and it was before this implement of a slave's shame and a murderer's punishment, that the eagles of ancient, the dragons of later Rome gave way. It was before this Cross, woven on the Labarum, that the Pagan armies of Maxentius were driven into the panic which Raphael has so grandly pictured in his Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

¶ When upon one occasion the Emperor Justinian was about to surrender to the clamorous claims and the harsh and violent demands of the mob, his wife Theodora is represented to have said to him that it was better to meet and go down to death as the avowed ruler of all than purchase life for a little while by yielding to the unworthy exactions of the unrighteous few; and empire, she tells him, "is the best winding-sheet." Empire, universal empire, throughout all the world, throughout all the ages, is the winding-sheet of Jesus Christ. Victorious in the wilderness, victorious in Gethsemane, before that worldly-minded

[1] T. R. Williams, *God's Open Door*, 56.

Governor in the judgment hall, victorious on the Cross, because His eye looked not upon the unworthy demands of the immediate occasion, but upon the everlasting years, upon all future times, and wrapped around in the winding-sheet of empire does He die.[1]

II.

The King of Truth.

1. *Jesus claimed Kingship.*—Pilate asked our Lord plainly, "Art thou a King?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest it," an expression which in Oriental language was equivalent to an affirmative, "Yes, I am what thou sayest." But Christ took no place or rank among the acknowledged world-kings. All forms of world-dominion He refused. Throughout His life He repressed every attempt to gain for Him an earthly royalty, even as at the beginning of His ministry He repelled the devil's offer of the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. The only royal robe He ever wore was the scarlet robe of mockery and insult; the only crown that ever encircled His brow was the crown of suffering and plaited thorns; the only sceptre He ever bore was the reed with which cruel hands smote Him. This does not seem kingly; yet, could we but understand and appreciate it aright, there is a grandeur and moral splendour about it such as never circled round the marble throne, and gorgeous draperies, and jewelled crowns of any mere world-king. World-kings are kings of wealth, and genius, and lands, and people, and armies. The Christ-King, crowned with thorns, is yet the King of the suffering, King of the patient, King of the spiritual, King of souls, King of the eternal, King of truth.

2. *Jesus is the embodiment of truth.*—Milton says of truth: "Truth indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on." Milton looks upon truth as one who comes with Christ into the world. Would it not be better to say that Christ Himself is the Embodiment of truth, for He says, "I am the truth"? Christ's own testimony is proof of this, for three times in the Gospel according to St. John

[1] D. H. Greer, *From Things to God*, 36.

He speaks of Himself as the True One. He is the True Vine for reproduction (John xv. 1), in contrast to Israel, who proved to be the false vine (Jer. ii. 21). He is the True Bread for satisfaction (John vi. 32), in contrast to the manna in the wilderness, which only met the present necessity of the people; and He is the True Light for illumination (John i. 9), in contrast to the false wrecker-lights of men.

3. *Jesus bore witness to the truth.*—This was the purpose of His mission. "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." He is now before Pilate and nearing the close of His earthly life. The unity of His life, we see as we study it, is the following out to the minutest detail of the principle which He says has been and is His controlling purpose—to testify to the truth. In the events which are to follow, Jesus is true to the conception of His mission, even though His persistence in bearing witness to the truth leads Him to the ignominious death upon the cross. Fidelity to His mission He carried to the extent of yielding up His own life rather than cease to bear witness to the truth.

(1) He bore witness by His *character.*—It is nothing more than a simple truism to say that, apart from the metaphysics of His Person, which opens a wide field for speculative controversy, Jesus is the supreme revealer of God. The character of the invisible and omnipresent Deity, whom no eye can fully see, and no life can adequately express, who is without an equal in wisdom and power and goodness, is focused, as it were, in the personality of Jesus. That which overwhelms us by its mystery and vastness, as we look into the universe around us—of which we are a part—is brought within the range of our vision, and the reach of our love, by Jesus of Nazareth. Not only is there revelation in its loftiest compass, and in its most unveiled expression, but there is something special and unique in the form of it.

(2) He bore witness by His *Ministry and Passion.*—There are groups of pines on the crag-ledges of Umbria which strike the eye against the clear still sky when the autumn night is coming. Each tree alone is weird, it is gnarled and twisted, bared by the tempest, or distorted and tortured by the pitiless wind; but the group they form together has nothing but dignity, the dignity of support and

endurance in a lonely world. So it is essential life, together with unparalleled pain leading up to a voluntary and a dreadful death, that gives to the witness of the Passion the emphasis of extent and intensity.

¶ When in the fifth century the Byzantine Empire was sinking into the decrepitude of a merely nominal Christianity, St. Chrysostom saw some converted Goths, with their clear blue eyes and yellow hair, kneeling to worship in one of the Basilicas of Constantinople, and he prophesied that that bold and hardy race should snatch the torch of truth from the more faithless and more feeble hands. They had laid down their barbarism, they had broken their idols at the feet of Him whom they called "The White Christ." Their own fierce chieftains they chose from the boldest soldiers, and lifted them upon their shields, amid shouts of warriors and clash of swords; but they bowed before the royalty of a crucified Redeemer. Of their race in part are we. And if we fail in our allegiance to Christ, He will never lack other soldiers and other servants; for though the heart of men be full of evil, though for a time they may say, "We will not have this man to reign over us," yet when the last appeal shall come to them, whether they will have Christ for a king, at last they will fall upon their knees in agonies of penitence, and in dust and ashes, with tears and with *misereres*, with beaten breasts, with uplifted hands, they will sigh back their answer—"Christ is King!"[1]

III.

Allegiance to the Truth.

1. Jesus before Pilate is the Truth making its appeal and waiting for judgment.

(1) *Pilate was indifferent to the truth.*—It was said of a distinguished American jurist that he finally retired from the bench because he could not there escape making decisions. Pilate was this kind of man. The French statesman, Talleyrand, writing in his old age of the qualities of a Minister of Foreign Affairs, said: "He ought to be gifted with a kind of instinct which prevents him from committing himself." Pilate was a good example of the school of Talleyrand. Here was this young

[1] F. W. Farrar, *True Religion*, 200.

enthusiast who had so stirred the people by the kingly declaration of His mission, "To this end was I born, that I should bear witness unto the truth"; and Pilate, the consistent neutral, looked down on Him with serious pity and answered, "Ah, my young friend, what is this illusion for which you want to die? Die for it, then, if you will! I find no fault in you; I wash my hands of blame. You bring your fate upon yourself." And so dismissing this case of an alien, he retired into his palace, well content with himself because he had been neither ensnared by the enthusiasm of the reformer nor misled by the bigotry of the mob.

(2) *Pilate turned away from the truth.*—The Prisoner before him had accepted the title of a king. He based His claim to this title on the fact that He had come to bear witness to the truth. He declared that those who were themselves of the truth would acknowledge His claim; they were His rightful subjects; they were the enfranchised citizens of His Kingdom. Strange language this in the ears of a cynical, worldly sceptic, to whose eyes the most attractive type of humanity was a judicious admixture of force and fraud. "Pilate saith unto him, What *is* truth? And when he had said this, he went out." The altercation could be carried no further. Was not human life itself one great query, without an answer? What was truth, what else, except that which each man thought? Truth! This helpless Prisoner claimed to be a king, and He appealed, forsooth, to His truthfulness as the credential of His sovereign rights. Was ever any claim more contradictory of all human experience, more palpably absurd than this? Truth! When had truth anything to do with founding a kingdom? The mighty engine of imperial power, the iron sceptre which ruled the world, whence came it? Certainly it owed nothing to truth. Had not Augustus established his sovereignty by an unscrupulous employment of force, and maintained it by an astute use of artifice? And his successor, the present occupant of the imperial throne, was he not an arch dissembler, the darkest of all dark enigmas? The name of Tiberius was a by-word for impenetrable disguise. Truth might do well enough for fools and enthusiasts, for simple men; but for rulers, for diplomatists, for men of the world, it was the wildest of all wild dreams. Truth! What was truth? He had lived too long in the world to trust any such hollow pretensions.

(3) *Pilate was surprised and judged by the truth.*—He found himself unexpectedly confronted by the truth, and he could not recognise it. His whole life long he had tampered with truth, he had despised truth, he had despaired of truth. Truth was the last thing that He had set before him as the aim of his life. He had thought much of policy, of artifice, of fraud, of force; but for truth in any of its manifold forms he had cared just nothing at all. And his sin had worked out its own retribution. Not truth only, but the Very Truth itself, Truth Incarnate stood before him in human form, and he was blind to it. He scorned it, he played with it, he thrust it aside, he condemned and he crucified it. "Suffered under Pontius Pilate" is the legend of eternal infamy with which history has branded his name.

2. Those who are in sympathy with the truth will pay it homage. A very good illustration of this will be found in the methods of scientific inquiry as it is now prosecuted. For the man of science seeks nothing in his researches into nature but simply to discover the truth. For this purpose he toils, working hard by day, and watching long by night, if that should be needful. He spares no pains to verify his facts and observations. He multiplies experiments to rectify possible errors. If these show that he was before on a wrong track, he gives it up, and follows the line suggested by the later results of his inquiries; for his object is not to establish a foregone conclusion, but simply to find out the truth. That truth, when he finds it, may startle many folk, may unsettle former opinions, may seriously affect many interests and recognized authorities. He cannot help that. It is his business simply to find what the facts are and what they plainly teach; and when he has done that he says: "There is the truth, and that is the way by which I reached it, step by step. As for all else, I have nothing to do with it whatever. A lie has no vested interests that I can respect: nor will any authority make it anything but a lie. Truth, too, is always, in the long run, wholesome and best for all. And if this be true it is at your peril that you reject it. Be sure that, in so doing, you shall be the losers." Thus, in his own province, he seeks the truth diligently and fearlessly; and one of the noblest results of his researches is the state of mind which he thus helps to produce, with its loyalty

and courage and persistent love of truth. Out of his own province, indeed, he is often very much like other men, hasty, not over careful about his facts, and jumping to ill-considered conclusions. But in prosecuting his proper work, his methods and his spirit afford a good illustration of what it is to be sincerely "of the truth."

¶ "I say," broke in one of the boys, who was just emerging from the tenderfoot stage, "o' course that's in the Bible, ain't it?"

The Pilot assented.

"Well, how do you know it's true?"

The Pilot was proceeding to elaborate his argument when Bill cut in somewhat more abruptly than was his wont.

"Look here, young feller!" Bill's voice was in the tone of command. The man looked as he was bid. "How do you know anything's true? How do you know the Pilot here's true when he speaks? Can't you tell by the feel? You know by the sound of his voice, don't you?"[1]

(1) Sometimes the truth comes to us at once. It dawns upon us, shines on us, without any conscious effort of our own or immediate seeking on our part:

> Think ye 'mid all this mighty sum
> Of things for ever speaking,
> That nothing of itself will come,
> But we must still be seeking?

This is *intuition*: but it does not come miraculously; there has been a long preparation for it in the race and often also in the individual. There are other truths that have to be long and earnestly sought for, in the quest of which all our intellectual powers must be employed, and the endeavour strenuously made to free the mind from all personal bias and unwillingness to believe. We often go without the truth because we are too indolent or indifferent to seek it earnestly, or because we are prejudiced against it and unwilling to receive it. There is certainly a moral element involved in the search for and the reception of truth. We have ears that hear not and eyes that see not. Truth reveals itself to those who love it; it comes to those who will give it a home.

(2) And sometimes we reach it gradually. In ascending

[1] Ralph Connor, *The Sky Pilot*, ch. xxi.

the mountains of Switzerland, the climber begins his journey by a disappointing contradiction. He descends from some sheltering châlet, by the light of the waning moon; he has to go over a broken path, and with a stealthy step; there are before him real tracts of trouble; the dim light alters proportions, and deceives as to distance, and so, plunging onwards, he hurts his feet. Onward he goes; he must cross the interspaces of gloom, where the shadows fall in blackness on the bases of the mountains, thick, with no shading of pity, but dusky and cruel as the hangings of Death. Onward, onward, the grasp of darkness is at last relaxing; the sky is clearer; there is a promise of the coming day; he struggles higher; around him are rising innumerable peaks, sheathed in the frost-sheets of diamond, and with the glint of the mingling glitter of the moonlight and the morning. It is an ice-world of splendour,—mountaineering made glorious,—for the light is increasing, there is a feeling of freshness, a sense of security, an exhilaration of joy; the dimness is dying, the severest of the struggle is distanced, he feels, and, with a sense of triumph, he has his feet on the track of Dawn.

(3) But our eye must always be single. The seeker after truth must fulfil one condition: he must lead a true life, a life of moral rectitude at least. A false life can never come to the truth, for truth is revealed only to truth. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," was advice founded on a melancholy experience. "Blessed beyond all earthly blessedness," said one who came through the fiery ordeal not scathless, and is now enjoying the peace he hardly found on earth,—"blessed beyond all earthly blessedness is the man who, in the tempestuous darkness of the soul, has dared to hold fast to those venerable landmarks of morality. Thrice blessed is he who, when all is drear and cheerless within and without, when his teachers terrify him and his friends shrink from him, has obstinately clung to moral good. Thrice blessed, because *his* night shall pass into clear bright day."

¶ We may call to mind the experience of Columbus, when he found himself entangled in the Sargasso Sea in the midst of the ocean, to the westward of the Canary Islands. As far as eye could see the surface was thickly covered with weed, through which it seemed hopeless to seek to penetrate. To his sailors the

attempt seemed even impious; the Almighty had shown His anger at their endeavour to peer into His secrets. Columbus himself feared that these weeds might indicate the proximity of dangerous rocks on which his vessel might be wrecked. But, strong in his faith in an undiscovered land, he steered right onward, carefully sounding from time to time, till in a few days they got clear of the weeds, out again into the free ocean, and in due time reached the western shore he was seeking. So it ever is in the search for truth, if we are in earnest and will but persevere, with our minds open to such guidance, Divine and human, as we can find, carefully taking soundings as we proceed, but never losing faith in the reality and attainability of truth. We shall not indeed reach all truth, or even the whole truth on any particular subject; but we shall find what we need for mental rest and true practical life.[1]

In the bitter waves of woe,
  Beaten and tossed about
By the sullen winds that blow
  From the desolate shores of doubt,—

When the anchors that faith had cast
  Are dragging in the gale,
I am quietly holding fast
  To the things that cannot fail:

I know that right is right;
  That it is not good to lie;
That love is better than spite,
  And a neighbour than a spy;

I know that passion needs
  The leash of a sober mind;
I know that generous deeds
  Some sure reward will find;

That the rulers must obey;
  That the givers shall increase;
That Duty lights the way
  For the beautiful feet of Peace;—

In the darkest night of the year,
  When the stars have all gone out,
That courage is better than fear,
  That faith is truer than doubt;

[1] W. L. Walker, *The True Christ*, 12.

And fierce though the fiends may fight,
  And long though the angels hide,
I know that Truth and Right
  Have the universe on their side;

And that somewhere, beyond the stars,
  Is a Love that is better than fate;
When the night unlocks her bars
  I shall see Him, and I will wait.[1]

[1] Washington Gladden.

The Saviour's Easter Greeting.

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THE SAVIOUR'S EASTER GREETING.

When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had said this, he shewed unto them his hands and his side.—John xx. 19, 20.

1. IT is the evening of the first Easter Day. In an upper chamber in Jerusalem—in all probability in the upper chamber which had been the scene of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, and was to be the scene of the baptism of the Church by the descending Spirit, and then to be the place of the first of Christian assemblies, the mother of all Churches—it is in this upper chamber that we see gathered together a band of men and women. They are in a position of restlessness up to the point of fear. They feel the restlessness of men whose lives are in great danger. The tomb of the Master whom they loved was found empty. The foes of Jesus imagined that this was by the connivance of the disciples themselves. His disciples had come, they said, and stolen the body whilst the guards placed to keep watch over it slept. The disciples accordingly anticipated that that fury of the Jews which had burst with such force upon their Master would now descend upon their heads. But they were not only in this bodily fear. This bodily fear would not have been in them if they had not been restless in mind. They did not know what to believe, they were in perplexity. The tomb of Christ was empty. By a resurrection? They could not believe that. True, their Lord again and again had tried to prepare them for that mystery of His resurrection, but they could not understand it. How then was it empty? Not by any act of their own, they knew very well. And the perplexity was increased in this way—some people said He was risen; some women said they had seen Him. Were these but women's stories after all? If they were not true, what was true? Was He *risen* or was He not?

Jesus came, unannounced and unexpected, into the midst of these perplexed disciples. Their very fear drew Him to them. They wanted Him: He knew it, and could not keep away. It was "the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut." They wanted the old familiar times back again. If He would come and bring them how much more faithful they would be to Him than in the past. But He was gone, and they dare not keep the door ajar, for they had no courage and much fear. And then, lo! He was there, standing in the midst of them, with the old kind smile upon His face, and the calm strong greeting on His lips. "Peace be unto you," He said, and showed them His hands and His side.

2. This was the greeting He would naturally have given them on any occasion on which He came to them in the days of His earthly life in the body. Those who have lived in Eastern lands seem to hear the Lord's voice when they read His salutation, the sound of which from the lips of all visitors they know so well. But we must believe that the words "Peace be unto you" had a more than ordinary significance on this occasion. They were intended to convey a real inward comfort, and to produce, in the mind of those who heard them, the assurance that a new and blessed influence had entered into them. In the darkest hour of their earthly companionship, when the deep shadow of approaching separation was resting upon them, the Lord had said "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Their hearts were too sad at the time to receive any comfort from the saying, sweet and soothing though the sound of the words must even then have seemed. But now, in the very first words He speaks to them after His Resurrection, He fulfils His promise, and proves to them the reality of His own gift. Then, having allayed their terror, He certifies them of His bodily identity by showing them His hands and His side. There was no longer any possibility of doubting the truth of His Resurrection, and feelings of gladness at once dispelled the former doubts and apprehensions.

¶ For those disciples that day had been a very restless one. They had been troubled by what the women said, and by their own many questionings and thoughts. Sin came back on Peter and on others, and the very thing they needed most was that He

should stand and say, "Peace be unto you; see my hands and my side." And do we not realize that very often at the end of the day Christ comes to us, when we are troubled with a sense of sin? And those of us who are trying to live nearest the true Light are most conscious of sin and imperfection. There never was a day we ever lived in which there were not many things that came short of the glory of God, and there is never an evening in which we do not have to say, "Forgive us our debts," our shortcomings, even if we do not need to say, "Forgive us our trespasses," our transgressions. There is always the coming short of His glory, even if there is not voluntary transgression of His will. And so there never is a time when we do not need that He should show us His hands and His side, and say, "Beloved, there is the guarantee that your sin is put absolutely away, that there is nothing between God and you but one clear heaven of love."[1]

¶ I happened to drop into a house where there was a large family, and I found the mother very busy about the room. "What are you doing?" I asked. "Oh, when the children have gone to bed I have to tidy up after them, and I make straight what they have left amiss." And there she was, just going over all the broken fragments of the children's work, and taking up the stitches that her little daughter had put all across the piece of work she had given the child to do. I could see quite well the big cross stitches, and how the mother was taking them up and making them good. I said to myself: Yes, that is just what Christ does. He comes into the day's life and work, when all the mistakes have been made, and the poor sermons have been preached, and the mis-statements have been uttered, and one looks back with such a sense of infinite regret and failure, and He says: "Peace be unto you. I am going over all the mistakes to put them right, and help to make powerful that which you left impotent and useless."[2]

I.

The Appearance Behind Closed Doors.

"When the doors were shut."

1. Barriers are often raised unwittingly against Christ. When the disciples shut and locked the doors of the upper chamber, they never meant to bar them against Jesus. They were afraid

[1] F. B. Meyer, in *The Keswick Week* (1900), 132. [2] *Ibid.*

of the Jews, and acted only in self-defence. And there are lines of conduct in common life we may pursue, and we never dream that we are raising barriers between ourselves and the highest and the best: but in the end of the day for us, as for the disciples, it will be found that we have done more than we imagined—we have closed the door unwittingly on Christ.

It is the tragedy of many a life that its doors are shut. Sometimes it is engrossment in pleasure, in business, in friendship, that bars the door against the ingress of the Saviour. All these things, lawful in themselves, and having indeed a right and necessary place in any life, may gain such an ascendancy as to become its masters, demanding all thought, all energy, all strength of life, until the man over whom they have gained control is himself behind closed doors. Sometimes it is by selfishness of joy or sorrow that the doors are closed. There is a joy which is regarded as incommunicable, or a sorrow which is regarded as unshareable, and He who is the Author of each is excluded from life by His own providences misreceived and misinterpreted. Often, too, it is with us as with these His earliest disciples, fear of the consequences of identification with Him causes the door to be tightly barred. We are afraid of the disfavour of men, and in shutting out the Jews we really shut out Jesus. But chiefly it is sin that excludes the Son of God from the life in which He seeks to be known and served. And this, too, may be of unintentional beginning. For sin at its commencement is often merely thoughtlessness. Persisted in, however, despite the correcting light which God is unceasingly shedding upon us, it becomes actually wilful—the rebellious barring of the door against the Son of God.

¶ Every morning that we rise, every day that we go forth, our choices make us or our choices mar us. Some day a choice more momentous than usual comes. We are face to face with one of life's great decisions. And we have not been living on high levels, and so we choose amiss, for a man's whole life is in every choice he makes. Then the days pass, and the issues show themselves, and the choice works itself out in life and character, and a hundred glorious things are tarnished and are tainted as the result of one disastrous choice. We never meant to shut out power and purity, but they have receded into the dim distance ever since. We never thought to grow heart-weary and world-

weary, but that may follow from one mismanaged choosing. Like the disciples, beset by some poor fear, unwittingly we have closed the door on Christ.[1]

> And Life with full hands came,
> Austerely smiling.
> I looked, marvelling at her gifts—
> Fortune, much love, many beauties,
> The deed fulfilled man ponders in his youth,
> Gold of the heart, desire of the eyes come true!
> And joyously
> "With these," I said "with these, indeed,
> What spirit could miss delight?"
> And paused to dream them over.
> But even then
> "Choose," she said.
> "One gift is yours—no more,"
> And bent that grave, wise smile
> Upon me, waiting.[2]

2. He came; they knew not how; they knew only that the chamber was strongly secured against intrusion or surprise. No bolt was withdrawn; no door was opened; no breach was made in the wall of their place of assembly; there was no visible movement as from without to within, or from point to point. One moment they were, as they thought, alone; and the next, they looked, and lo! an outline, a form, a visible body and face, a solid human frame was before them, as if created out of the atmosphere which they breathed. "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." They gazed at Him; they gazed at each other in bewilderment and terror. They supposed that they had seen a "spirit"; they were with difficulty reassured —so St. Luke's report seems to imply—by the means which our Lord took to convince them that a body of flesh and bones was before them. At last they were glad when they saw the Lord.

Christ is inevitable, unavoidable; you cannot stop or stay Him. That is the first great lesson of the Resurrection. No one can follow the story of His life, without feeling that Christ is inevitable. It is the key to the whole record. We are swept into a movement which we realize is irresistible, and the secret of

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, 115.
[2] M. M'Neal-Sweeney, *Men of No Land*, 107.

its power is the irresistible Christ. We feel this not merely because Christ exercised an extraordinary influence and became the centre of a unique attraction, but because of what He was. His words and His works alike are significant first and chiefly of what He is in Himself; they are the revelation of a Person who more and more completely wins our absolute trust. When the Cross comes into view, crowning the path up which He is moving, we follow Him, knowing that, though it seems to be inexplicable, it comes within His purpose of redemption, and He fully understands it, however blind we may be to what it means. "I lay down my life for the sheep. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." It is all a complete unity, the one perfect whole in a world of fragments. And when we hear the "It is finished" ring out through the gloom of His death-hour, we are ready for the glory which will soon be breaking from the opened grave. And as at last we see Him coming to the disciples on Easter evening, though the doors are shut against Him, we know that always and everywhere He is and must be resistless. Always and everywhere He is the inevitable Christ.

¶ For weal or woe, whatever walls you raise, Christ passes through them all and gets to you. There are deeds that we did long since, perhaps twenty years ago, but to this hour unexpectedly they rise and meet us. There were moments of exquisite happiness in our past, and even to-day their memory is like music. You cannot shut out the thought of intense hours: no change of years will prevent them winning through. And like the ineffaceable memory of such scenes is the presence and the beauty of the Lord. Christ is inevitable. Christ is unavoidable. Sometimes He comes through the closed door, just because all life is penetrated with Him. We talk of the Christian atmosphere we breathe, but the atmosphere is more than Christian, it is Christ. This is the Lord's day—who then is this Lord? We may have closed the door on Him, but He is here. We cannot date one letter in the morning, but we mean that more than one thousand nine hundred years ago Christ was born. He meets us at every turn of the road, in every newspaper and in every problem. Our life is so interpenetrated with Christ Jesus that to avoid Him is an impossibility.[1]

¶ Men who lived and fought for Napoleon have told the world how they gradually came to believe him to be resistless. He had

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, 119.

only to appear before His troops on his white charger, and down the lines of French bayonets flashed an electric confidence which made them mighty, as soldiers had seldom been mighty before, and enabled them to carry all before them. So with "the Captain of our salvation." In the New Testament Christ goes forth "conquering and to conquer," and He intends His Church to live in the power of that inspiration. It is nothing to Him that doors are shut, and men are weak and helpless. You may as well try to stifle the springtide or struggle to fetter the feet of the summer morning as strive to bar out the coming of Jesus risen. You will draw a curtain over the dawn and shut down the sunrise behind the darkness before you will banish the inevitable Christ.[1]

¶ Francis Thompson has told with marvellous beauty of imagery and breadth of expression the story of the pursuit of the soul through all its manifold experience by "the Hound of Heaven," which will not let it escape Him.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat and a Voice beat
More instant than the feet . . .
"Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me."

So the foolish soul perseveres in flight from its Saviour, and on and on after it come those persistent feet which will not be denied. It tries to hide in strange and distant places; it rings itself in with forbidden pleasures; it lavishes its love upon tender and beautiful human affections, and still

Fear wist not to evade as love wist to pursue—

till at last the chase is ended, and the Voice is "round him like a bursting sea."

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
Ah! fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.

[1] F. B. Macnutt, *The Inevitable Christ*, 8.

3. But while Christ forces Himself thus upon our attention He never compels our submission. It is always a matter of choice and will with us as to the reception He receives when He appears. For when once He has secured our ear and engaged our thought He subjects Himself to our will. The crowning pathos and tragedy of life is to close the door more closely when we have been made aware of His Presence. Its crowning glory is to open it wide that the King of Glory may come in.

¶ A Sunday spent at Cambridge in order to preach before the University came to Creighton as a welcome break. He chose as the subject of his sermon "Liberty." Some years before at breakfast at Lambeth Palace, he had propounded the question what was the most important object of pursuit, and had maintained amidst the friendly and animated contradiction which never failed in that circle, that liberty was the most precious possession of man. This conviction only deepened as the years passed. But he felt also increasingly the tremendous responsibility of liberty, and said that, instead of snatching at it as a prize, it would be more true to speak of the burden of liberty. In this sermon at Cambridge he said: "If we try to grasp the meaning of progress as it is shown in the history of the past, it is to be found only in the growing recognition of the dignity of man, which is another form of expressing human freedom, and is the ground of its calm."[1]

II.

The Message of Peace.

"Peace be unto you."

This invocation of peace, at beginning or ending of intercourse, was already ancient. In our Lord's day it had become just as much part of the social habits of the people as the custom of saying "Good-morning" is among ourselves. All the Semitic peoples, the Syrians, the Arabians, and, as we know from the Talmud, the Jews of the Dispersion, used it as a matter of course. In earlier days, no doubt, men had invoked peace from heaven with the utmost deliberation and seriousness. In the age of the kings and prophets the phrase had still a living meaning: the speaker actually prayed for the blessing of peace on the person

[1] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. 320.

whom he addressed. It is a gradual process by which the real fresh language of primitive times is stiffened into the unmeaning forms of the society of a later age; but as far as this expression is concerned, the process was already complete in our Lord's day. And yet He did not scruple to avail Himself of the conventional phrase.

But this was not merely the familiar greeting of friend to friend—though it was that—in that strange moment when two worlds met. Nor was it merely a kindly word—though it was that, too—to pacify their terror, as this apparition from another world stood silently and suddenly before them. It was a word of larger, more majestic scope. Spoken to men who had met in fear, and who looked forward to troubled days, it had a wonderful power to soothe, coming from the lips of the Lord, fresh from His victory over death. "The disciples, therefore, were glad when they saw the Lord," glad with a great gladness which we cannot know till we have fathomed the depths of their sorrow and despair as they saw Jesus taken from His cross and laid in Joseph's tomb. Jesus is strangely earnest about this peace. Those worn, hunted men need it; and He will not leave them till He has made them sure of it. "Jesus therefore said to them *again*, Peace be unto you."

¶ A great soul can redeem his words from triviality. He takes the most conventional expressions, the small change of ordinary courtesy, which on the lips of other men mean nothing, and in his mouth they have such heart and substance that you go on cheered and bettered by his greeting. "Peace" is one of the anointed words which hold rank in human speech by native dignity, but in Palestine it had been degraded to the level of a customary civility, with which the most indifferent acquaintances met and parted. And Jesus takes the word, humbled and impoverished, and makes such use of it that it is no longer trivial but has the force of a command for their hearts.[1]

¶ Professor Johnston Ross relates that he once visited a furniture-dealer's shop in West London. The man was a Jew, and, noticing that his visitor wore clerical dress, he began to talk on religious matters. After an interesting conversation the Professor mounted his bicycle, saying, "Good-bye," when the dealer called out in Hebrew, "Peace be unto you"—using the

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 165.

plural form. The Professor's curiosity was aroused, and he asked: "Why do you put it so? Is there another that you wish peace to?" "Yes," replied the Jew, "Peace be to you and to the angel over your shoulder."

1. The first gift that Jesus had for them was a high confidence in their cause. Without that a Christian life cannot well be lived. He does not mean that we should live by sufferance, creeping timidly under the shadow of men's example; we are to have eyes and a conscience to know the truth, and courage to maintain it. The Christian Church has been built up by the fidelities of true men, and it gains no strength from those who have not courage to be faithful. These will come in thousands when the fashion once is set, but they bring nothing with them. They, certainly, can never be described as the city set on a hill which cannot be hid. Jesus Christ is the Lord of all the brave, and His gift is the high heart which sees its course and does not reckon odds.

¶ Peden, the Covenanter, speaks for all right Christians when he says, "For my part, I seek no more, if He bids me go." And in one of his sermons the refrain is this: "They sought no more than His commandment; they went and He carried them well through."[1]

2. But the deepest hurt in the life of a man is not the ill his neighbour threatens; there is a controversy behind that, a war in his own conscience, a sense that his own life is wrong, and that God and he are somehow not at one. And "Christ preached peace." He brought forgiveness to men, the assurance of God's forgetfulness. To the most faulty He declared the goodwill of God, assuring them of a place in His heart from which all their sin and folly have not banished them. There are powers in God to part us from our sin, so that it can never rise against us any more; and these powers are centred in the Cross of Christ, in which right was done to justice by Him who came to rescue men from what they had deserved.

¶ Christian peace, the peace which Christ gives, the peace which He sheds abroad in the heart, is it aught else than a glorified harmony; the expelling from man's life of all that was causing disturbance there, all that was hindering him from chiming in with the music of heaven, in which now shall

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 173.

mingle for ever the consenting songs of redeemed men and elect angels?[1]

¶ I couldn't live in peace if I put the shadow of a wilful sin between myself and God.[2]

¶ The realization of our peace with God, which constitutes or causes peace with ourselves, presupposes the reality of that peace with God; it does not create it. The fact must precede the knowledge of the fact, it cannot result from it. The ear does not discourse sweet music, or the eye produce a pleasant picture; in each case the organ of sense embraces an already existing reality. The rule holds good in the spiritual creation. That perfect harmony of will and reason and religious emotion which we denominate peace of conscience is not the cause of the sinner's reconciliation with an offended God, neither is it identical with it; it is the result and product of an actual reconciliation. For the condition of our own minds is as it were the shadow and reflection of the relation in which we stand to God. So long as we are at enmity with Him, so long as we feel ourselves to be exposed to His most righteous indignation, there is strife and war and tumult in our hearts. Only out of peace with God, and the conscious realization of that peace, can flow quiet of heart and peace of conscience.[3]

¶ Perhaps no Christian, since the days of the Apostles, has illustrated the true peace of the soul, which Jesus Christ gives, so fully as the great St. Augustine. Read his "Confessions." What a restless life his was before his conversion. His intellect was tossed on the waves of speculation, and he could grasp no reassuring truth. His heart was distracted by the ideals of false philosophy and sensuality in its various Protean forms. His conscience was profoundly stirred by conviction of sin; he was hurried along by a very tempest of passions, and there was no peace.

Then came his conversion. Jesus "rose in the soul." There was a change, which brought peace. *Tolle, lege*, "Take it up and read," were the words he heard in his agony; and he took up the scroll and read, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness"; and those words of St. Paul fell on the ear of his soul, and there was peace. His intellect surveys the vast realms of revelation and nature, and sees Christ—the Divine Logos—everywhere. His heart turns its

[1] Archbishop Trench, in *The Literary Churchman* (1892), 167.
[2] Maggie Tulliver, in *The Mill on the Floss*.
[3] W. B. Jones, *The Peace of God*, 360.

undisturbed and enraptured gaze on the Eternal Beauty—all ancient and all young. His will is redirected, the problem of duty is simplified, and he does it with all his heart. His conscience is calmed, for there is no longer any sense of feud between himself and holiness of life. All is pardoned through the cleansing Blood. All becomes possible through the grace of the Redeemer, and Augustine became the greatest saint the Catholic Church has produced since the time of the great Apostle himself.[1]

3. How did the peace of God, passing understanding, come to them that night? By the manifested presence of Him who first said, "Peace be unto you," and then showed them His hands and His side. He came as His own supreme Evangelist, in His own utterance of "peace." He let them see Him as His own supreme Evangel, in His finished sacrifice and that glorious sequel of it, His living Presence. So it is for ever. There is no substitute, nor ever can be, for personal relations with Christ, crucified and risen. Would we taste a "peace" which is indeed "of God"? It must be "through our Lord Jesus Christ," as not a principle only but a Person. Faith must see His wounds; faith must hear His benediction, nothing between, resting direct on Him. Only so will our life have banished out of it the bewilderment, the misgiving, which lie at the troubled heart of half-religion.

Wilt Thou not visit me?
The plant beside me feels Thy gentle dew;
And every blade of grass I see,
From Thy deep earth its quickening moisture drew.

Wilt Thou not visit me?
Thy morning calls on me with cheering tone;
And every hill and tree
Lend but one voice, the voice of Thee alone.

Come, for I need Thy love,
More than the flower the dew, or grass the rain
Come, gently as Thy holy Dove;
And let me in Thy sight rejoice to live again.

I will not hide from them
When Thy storms come, though fierce may be their wrath
But bow with leafy stem,
And strengthened follow on Thy chosen path.

[1] M. Fuller, *In Terrâ Pax*, 79.

Yes, Thou wilt visit me,
Nor plant nor tree Thine eye delights so well,
As when, from sin set free,
My spirit loves with Thine in peace to dwell.[1]

III.

The Confirmation of the Message.

"He shewed unto them his hands and his side."

Our Lord first convinced them of His identity. The deep shadows of evening were around them; a solitary lamp, perhaps, cast a glimmer of light through the large upper room, and made the darkness visible, while they were standing in a group and eagerly discussing the news of the Resurrection, which, first Mary Magdalene, then Peter, then the two disciples from Emmaus, had in turn brought in. And casually some one glanced aside into the darkened room, where all was vacancy; and surely the air was not seen to move—but it did move—and he looked again, and it moved again, and now a dim outline was seen. The disciple held his breath, and touched his neighbour and whispered. And they looked again, and the shadow had grown in distinctness, and others saw the shape. At length it was plainly visible to all, and it stood out in the very midst in the full proportions of a man, although a moment before they could neither see, nor feel, nor hear any one besides themselves. Well might they be filled with fear, and think that they had seen a spirit. Great need had they of hearing those soothing words, "Peace be unto you!"

And now, to show them not only that it was a true material organism, but the very body that had been crucified, He showed the ghastly gashes made in the crucifixion. Luke says, "He shewed them his hands and his feet": those hands and feet that had always been about His Father's business; hands that had waved away the powers of darkness; hands that had been placed on the heads of little children; hands that had broken the bread of miracle; feet that had walked the stormy waters; feet that

[1] Jones Very.

had carried Him to the weeping sisters, and the tomb of Lazarus; feet that had climbed the mountain stair into the midnight holy of holies, where He prayed; feet that had hastened to the side of the wretched, had stood near the most forlorn; feet that took Him down to Gethsemane, and failed Him there under the load of our sorrow; feet that with weak, fainting, yet resolute steps, came out of Jerusalem, while the hands assayed to hold upon His shoulder the cruel cross—the hands and the feet that were nailed to that cross.

¶ One time when David Livingstone was engaged in his civilizing work in Africa, he was attacked by a huge lion of the jungle. The ferocious beast grasped the hand of the missionary in his powerful jaws, and broke the bone. Livingstone was rescued by two friends who had accompanied him, but for a long time he was obliged to keep his arm in a sling. He carried the scar of the wound all his days, and when the faithful natives brought back his dead body to his native land, this scar on the arm once broken was one of the means by which the remains of the great missionary were identified by his friends.

1. *He confirmed His former word of peace.*—"My peace I give unto you," He had said, and the word lived in their ears like deep irony. And now, when they sat in gloomy silence, with their sorrow, and their peril, and thoughts of the empty future making peace impossible, He comes again with His former word. It was a time when the common greeting might well have sounded like a wrong; peace—when there is no peace and cannot be! But Jesus Christ, whose words are living, calls them back from all such petulance. In its fullest latitude He meant His word, and thus made trial of their faith; for peace was there, indeed, within their reach, if only they had courage to lay hands upon it. And in our disquiet the Lord speaks to us in the same way, and we shall gain or miss the help of His presence according as we deal with the promise of His word.

2. *He showed them the proofs of His victory.*—His appearance was more significant than any word He spoke. He appeared to those men time after time in order that, when He had withdrawn from their sight, they might know the truth, the reality concerning Him, and know it for ever; that all doubt, all hesitation, might be gone from their minds. He showed Himself to them

that they might have His image in their hearts, and send on that image into our hearts through all the ages. Just as on earth in the days of His mortality He revealed Himself, so now in the days of His resurrection power He does but reveal Himself. Is there a halo? There is none. Are there the robes of royalty? They are not mentioned. Is His advent into the room heralded by the acclaim of the archangels? No. But we are told in both records —it is the very central point of the narrative—that He showed them His hands and His feet. We are told that on the next Sabbath He saw Thomas, and He said, "See my hands; see my side." The marks of the suffering were upon Him. His body was changed strangely. It was raised to a condition of existence entirely different from the old condition; but there was something that was not changed. When you think how much was changed, that which was not changed is all the more significant. Instead of the halo there were the wound-prints, and it was those wound-prints that won for Him the name "My Lord and my God."

¶ Our Lord bought peace with His Passion. It is to the Passion that He ascribes the Peace. He comes back with the signature of that treaty of peace written in His hands and side. There did not seem to be much peace in the Passion, rather it was the breaking of the storm. The old man in the Temple looked across the sky of the Child-life to where the clouds were gathering for Him and His Mother; and on the Cross the storm broke. But the vessel, lost to sight in the storm, again appears, though with rigging torn and battered hull, creeping back to port with the dignity of a struggle that has found the goal.[1]

[1] F. E. Ridgeway, *Calls to Service*, 219.

Christ's Mission and Ours.

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Christ's Mission and Ours.

As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.—John xx. 21.

1. It was the evening of the greatest day in history, and the little company of the disciples sat watching anxiously within locked doors. They had waited all day for Jesus, but Jesus had not come. And now it was evening, and their hopes had perhaps dwindled with the setting of the sun, when suddenly, silently—without the sound of footfall or the warning of opened door—He was there. "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said he shewed unto them his hands and his side. . . . Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you; as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

2. What an astonishing statement it is! Christ makes Himself co-ordinate with the Father. He associates in indefeasible unity "the Father" and "I." He tacitly claims the right to do what the Father does. He makes Himself equal with God. He was either incarnate God, or He was incredible blasphemer; there is no escape from the alternative. It is in such implications that we see our Saviour's Deity. These subtle claims of Christ are irresistible arguments for His absolute divineness.

3. Quite as astonishing are these words from another point of view. Not only does the Lord associate Himself uniquely with God, but in a wonderful way He associates Christians with Himself. What an honourable vocation He assigns to His people! He sends us as He Himself was sent. He classes His disciples with Himself. He who said "the Father—I," says, "Me—you." Ours is a task analogous to His. What He thus declares to His disciples He expressly declares to God the Father,

in that high-priestly prayer of His: "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world." This immutable word which puts such honour upon Christians Christ asseverates alike to God and to man. "What a word is this!"

4. What is the real and permanent value of that message? It reveals His conception of the meaning of our mission; it unveils before us the truth concerning the responsibility of the Church of Jesus Christ, the truth concerning the responsibility of all the Churches of Jesus Christ, the truth concerning the responsibility of every individual member thereof.

I.

The Son and the Disciples.

1. There is a series of remarkable utterances, found only in St. John, in which our Lord draws a parallel between the relation He bears to the Father and the relation the believer bears to Himself. In these passages our Lord asserts that He is the central and connecting link in a dual relationship the upper and lower sides of which exactly correspond to each other. What the Father is to the Son, that Christ is to him who believes in Him. And thus Jesus Christ stands midway between the Father and us, and the lines of communication between earth and heaven pass through Him. All that the Father has to communicate is first received by Him and then transmitted to us, while on the other hand He receives the love and trust and obedience of His disciples and passes it all on in turn to the Father.

(1) "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John vi. 57). The whole series of utterances now under consideration is cast in this parallel form. There is something more than similarity of relationship implied in these words; they also imply that the great principle of life is an identical principle both on the upper and on the lower side of this relationship. Life is the same in us as in God; and wonderful as the thought may be, it is nevertheless true that when we believe in Christ and through Him are made partakers of spiritual life, we enter into communion

with the life of God Himself. When one thinks of life in man as one thing and life in God as another, one has lost the key to the science of life. Spiritual life is not a series of isolated springs, but an ocean laving every shore.

(2) "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you" (John xv. 9). Here again we have the same passing on from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the disciple. The love of the Father to the Son is beyond human comprehension. It is frequently referred to in the Gospel narratives, but always as a sacred and mystical thing which it is almost a sacrilege to unveil to the common gaze. Christ Himself says, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." But love, like life, is the same throughout the universe; the same bond that unites God and Christ unites Christ and the disciple, and the disciple and his fellow-disciple, and the heart of the humblest believer thrills with the same love that dwells in the heart of God. "I have declared unto them thy name," says Christ, "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them."

(3) "I know my sheep, and am known of mine, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father" (John x. 14, 15). These two verses belong to one sentence, and must not be separated as in the Authorized Version. They are two sides of a comparison. Christ is speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd, and of the perfect understanding there is between Him and His sheep. There is an instinctive recognition by which the sheep know the shepherd, and the shepherd knows the sheep. And our Lord declares that this reciprocal knowledge and intimacy is of the same kind as that which exists between Him and His Father.

(4) "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John xv. 10). That obedience is the true test of love is a commonplace of Christian thought; Christ has taught us this in His familiar admonition, "If ye love me keep my commandments." But here our Lord shows us how this principle runs up into the higher sphere, and forms the basis of the love which exists between Him and God. It is a law that operates universally, in heaven as well as on earth; it is not peculiar to the sphere of earthly discipleship but rules also in the heavenly places; an ordinance whose sway is felt throughout the whole circle of being.

Christ lived in the love of the Father because He always did the Father's will; His perfect obedience was the soil out of which the flower of love grew; His oneness of will and desire with the Father formed the harmonious environment in which alone love can subsist. "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." And now our Lord takes that exalted experience of His—the life which He lived toward the Father—and turns it earthward, as the pattern of our relation to Him. Obedience is the royal law that binds the Father, the Son, and the disciple in one fellowship of love.

(5) "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John xvii. 18). Christ thus links the mission of His disciples to that which He received from the Father, and makes their work the outcome and continuation of His own. The purpose which brought Christ into the world runs through the whole service and ministry of the Church, and the work in which Christian men and women are employed to-day is a continuation of the purpose of the Incarnation. The commission which the Father placed first in the hands of Jesus Christ, Christ has handed on to His disciples, thus raising them to the position of co-workers with Himself, to share in the honour and privilege of carrying out the redeeming purpose of God.

(6) For a final instance of this special form of expression let us turn to Rev. iii. 21. Though we go outside the Gospel for this passage, we do not quit the circle of St. John's writings; nor is there any change in the person of the speaker. And the fact that these words were spoken from heaven, after our Lord's exaltation to the right hand of God, makes it all the more significant that they should assume the same parallel form as those we have already examined, which were spoken while He was on earth. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Here we see that this twofold relationship runs right through to the end, and is completed in the final triumph and glory of Christ's people in heaven.[1]

¶ The beginning of the Gospel is to be found in the thought and love of God. We may cast our lines back as far as we can through the ages of eternity, and we shall never be able to find

[1] J. T. Hamly.

the point at which God's concern for the welfare of the universe that was to be first began, and yet the Lamb of God is said to have been slain from before the foundation of the world. The sacrifice of Christ was not an afterthought on the part of the Divine Being; it was, so to speak, part of Himself, an element of His very Godhead and of His very existence. So that, if we are really to go back to what may be termed the beginning of beginnings, we shall have to search the depths of the Divine existence, and follow all the wonderful and infinite course of the Divine thinking and purpose and love. There, of course, we are lost. Our hearts can only point, as it were, towards that great solemn mystery. Explanation we have none. Special indication is entirely beyond our power. We are lost in wonder, and our wonder is lost in speechlessness.

The second beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is found in the Incarnation of God's Son. We begin the next time at Bethlehem. We were lost when it was a mere question of unuttered and in speech unutterable love. We only begin to think and to feel and to understand in part God's meaning, when He utters His love not in speech, but in the person, the flesh and blood of God's dear Son. We can begin there—little children can begin at that point; our love can commence its study at the cradle of our Lord Jesus Christ. Creatures like ourselves need alphabets, beginnings, sharp lines, visibilities. We are not all pure mind; we cannot dwell upon the abstract, the unconditioned, the absolute, the infinite, in matters of this kind. We need some one to look at, to speak to, to go up to quite closely, and to hear speak the language of the love of God. This is what may be termed the second beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Where, then, are we to look for the third beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? We look for it in the Church. As He was, so are we to be in the world. We are to be "living epistles, known and read of all men." When men ask, "Where is Christ?" we are to show them Christianity. And when they ask, "What is Christianity?" we are to show them the Church —meanwhile, indeed, an incomplete representation of the truth, yet Jesus Christ Himself claims it, and devolves upon the Church the responsibility not only of bearing His name by exemplifying His life, but of interpreting His doctrine and living upon His love.[1]

2. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Mark the deep significance of that resounding "as" and "even so."

[1] J. Parker.

The parallel involves disparity. He is God, and we are but men. He came to atone, and we but preach His sovereign atonement. This and much more is implied in the fact that in this text two different Greek verbs are used, which are translated by the common word "send." The sending of Jesus was a grander sending far than the sending of us. He represents God more intimately and vividly than we can ever represent Him. But if there be this disparity there is in many respects a wonderful identity between His mission in the world and ours. The tenses of the verbs in the original indicate this in a very generative manner. "As the Father hath sent me"—the tense shows that the commission is still in force—"even so send I you." The idea is that our commission is but a continuation of His in another form. The duty of the Christian is practically equivalent to the mission of the Christ. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

¶ The word "send" which He uses concerning Himself is not the same word "send" as that used concerning His disciples. He speaks of Himself as the Apostle of the Father; He says, in effect, "My Father hath delegated authority to Me," but He never delegated authority to His disciples. The word used concerning them was simpler, and merely indicates that they are His messengers. He dispatches them under authority, but He holds the authority within His own grasp.

Thus the commission of Matthew harmonises with the declaration of John: "All authority is given unto me; go ye, therefore," and be My messengers and preach My Gospel. Jesus has never delegated His authority either to man or to men, to synods or to conferences, or even to unions; He holds it still Himself.

This is not to degrade the office of the Church; it is to indicate the fact that He brings the Church into such union with Himself that she is to exercise His authority. She is to be the instrument through which He carries out the purposes of God. God delegated all authority to His Son; and His Son calls into living and vital union with Himself all believers, and they become the instruments through which He carries out the work of God.

And I think the same meaning is found in the words He used on another occasion, when He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"; and then, presently, He brought into association with Himself all His disciples when He used the plural and said, "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day."

If this be the meaning of the text, then the mission of the Church in the world is the mission of Christ. He is the Sent of

the Father, still the living and present Worker; but the Church is His Body—bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." And as the Church of Jesus Christ realizes her actual and vital union with Christ, she becomes the instrument through which He moves to the accomplishment of His work.[1]

¶ But to be a true disciple is to think of the same things as our prophet, and to think of different things in the same order. To be of the same mind with another is to see all things in the same perspective; it is not to agree in a few indifferent matters near at hand and not much debated; it is to follow him in his farthest flights, to see the force of his hyperboles, to stand so exactly in the centre of his vision that, whatever he may express, your eyes will light at once on the original, that whatever he may see to declare, your mind will at once accept.[2]

II.

The Mission of Christ and Our Mission.

The Mission of Jesus Christ to the world may be expressed by three great words—Revelation, Redemption, Salvation.

1. It is a mission of *Revelation.*

He came to declare the love of the Father's heart. The Father entrusted to the Son the manifestation of His love. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The love of the Father to a guilty and dying world was the substance of the Redeemer's message. "God so loved the world," it began. How it would have gladdened that poor prodigal in the parable if he had heard in the midst of his hunger and loneliness that his father tenderly cherished his memory still. He would not then have waited till the pangs of insatiate hunger drove him to his father's presence, if perchance it might yet be open to him, as the only alternative with death. Had a message from the father found him and called him home again, full joyously would he have trodden the homeward path. And so God loved the world in its rebellion and misery—shameful rebellion, no doubt, and merited misery; but

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

[2] R. L. Stevenson, *Lay Morals.*

they were His children who were groaning in bondage, and the meaning of their anguish reached and touched His heart. And God gave His only begotten Son, that the world should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now as the Father required for the expression of His own mind and will and love to the world, and by the very nature of the case, a sufficient and adequate image, organ, hand, word, and mediatorial ambassador; so Christ required—when He was about to return clothed in our humanity to the bosom of the Father, to the midst of the throne—a corresponding agency. We are not the direct representatives of the Invisible God, of Him who fills eternity and space with His glory; but we are sent by Christ to be the image, the messengers, the hands, the mediatorial representatives of His Divine humanity to the world in which we live. Therefore, first of all, in order to realize the grandeur of our calling, let us keep ever in mind that Christ sends us to men, that by our character, by our growing sanctification, by our holy living, by our entire walk, by our habits, our spirit, we may make Him known; He was and is the light of the world, but light itself is invisible unless reflected or refracted by the medium on or through which it vibrates. We may be able to reflect some one ray of the perfect beam of unsullied light.

¶ I am very glad that you asked me your question. May I put it this way? The contents of the Christian revelation is the Person of the Lord Jesus. Scripture is the *record* of that revelation. The Church is the *witness* of that revelation.

In early times, amongst a rude and semi-barbarous people, the Church was greatly engaged in considering how she was to discharge her function as a witness. But this process was largely concerned with mechanism. Just as the State was striving at the same time to embody the idea of justice; the method was imperfect, but the idea existed nowhere else. Still, at the present day, the State embodies that idea imperfectly; but we do not doubt about the idea itself. So with the revelation of which the Church is the guardian. That revelation is immediate to each human soul; and the attempts to express it in the forms of outward organisation — their partial success, their conspicuous failure—only make the eternal meaning of the revelation itself clearer and more precious.[1]

[1] *The Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, i. 416.

¶ One of the last acts of Henry Ward Beecher showed the true greatness of that great man. He was leaving Plymouth Church on the last Sabbath evening of his ministry, just as the strains of the organ were dying away, when he saw two little pauper children, who had come inside from the storm to listen to the music, startled with childish fright as he drew near, as though detected in some wrong; but the warm-hearted preacher spoke lovingly to them, and, kissing them, soothed away their fears, as he went out with them into the wintry cold and sleet, with his arms thrown around them to shelter and shield. And, doing this act of lowly love, he went home to die.[1]

2. It is a mission of *Redemption.*

(1) Christ came into the world to express God's absolute hatred of sin, and to extirpate it from the heart of man, by taking upon Himself all its curse and shame, bearing these to the bitter end. He came on a sacrificial and redeeming mission, to do what no angel or man could accomplish. He came to set forth what was eternally present in the Father's heart, to bring to a climax the expression of perfect holiness and boundless mercy, to bring righteousness and love with infinite travail and peerless joy into absolute unity, to justify by remission of sins past, present, and to come, and to prove that when men realize this awful and glorious fact, when little children can sob themselves to rest in the arms of Jesus, then full reconciliation, repentance, submission to the will of the Father supervene, and there is the beginning of a new and eternal life.

My blood so red
For thee was shed,
Come home again, come home again!
My own sweet heart, come home again!
You've gone astray
Out of your way—
Come home again, come home again!

(2) Now if we are sent at all, we are sent to take a share in the very ministry of our Lord Himself. Our service represents and continues His service. Our labour is indissolubly joined to His. We are actually brought into a partnership with Him who "came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his

[1] T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, 121.

life a ransom for many." And what a tremendous obligation does that fellowship lay upon us! We remember, with shame for ourselves, how utterly Christ gave Himself. Of Tissot's 365 drawings of His life, no less than 310 are concerned with the ministry and Passion: and yet even that proportion is inadequate to express the place which service occupied in the life of the Great Pastor. Why, surely His every act, His every word and thought, was service. The whole of His life was one long sacrificing of Himself for others. And when there was nothing further that His life could give, He gave the life itself a willing sacrifice in death. Well might our Lord, looking into the eager faces of His Apostles, ask, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?" Well may He put to us that question now!

> Scarce had she learnt to lisp the name
> Of Martyr; yet she thinks it shame
> Life should so long play with that breath
> Which spent could buy so brave a death.
> She never undertook to know
> What death with love should have to do;
> Nor has she e'er yet understood
> Why to shew love, she should shed blood.
> Yet though she cannot tell you why,
> She can love, and she can die.[1]

3. It is a mission of *Salvation.*

(1) In order to save the world He began with loving care showered on little children, with sympathy extending to the outcast and excommunicate, to the publican, the harlot, the devil-ridden, and the dead. He healed men one by one. He felt the special agony of the widow of Nain and of the family at Bethany. He had saving words for rulers and priests, for Pilate and Caiaphas, for His executioners, and for the dying brigand.

(2) Now in all this He was sent to unveil the righteousness and love of the Father, and He sends faithful souls who have learned His secret to carry out the plan of which He sets the example, the first beginnings of which He wrought alone. When a missionary, with patience, persists in saving one drunkard, one idolater, one cannibal from his otherwise inevitable doom, pursues the proud rebel with the calls of pity, or urgently plies any one

[1] Richard Crashaw.

despairing soul with the great consolation; when a missionary of the cross knows that his Master's order is, "Go, preach to every creature, compel the vile and the most ignorant, the most bewildered, to come into the light, and accept the conditions of salvation," he shares the burden of Jesus, takes His cross upon his shoulders, and hears and accepts His commission as certainly as if it had been thundered to him from the skies, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

¶ Wherever I see a young man teaching the Gospel to half-a-dozen children, I recognize a living branch of the Church of Christ.[1]

¶ The late Bishop Simpson relates a remarkable instance of the work of a young man in America, who started an institution for the care and improvement of poor imbecile children. Among those brought him was a little boy, five years of age, who had never made an intentional act, had never spoken a word, and had never given any look of recognition to a friend. He lay on the floor, a mass of flesh, without even ability to turn himself over. Such was the student brought to this school. The teacher made effort after effort to get the slightest recognition from his eye, or to produce the slightest voluntary movement; but in vain. Unwilling, however, to yield, he had the boy brought to his room, and he lay down beside him every day for half-an-hour, hoping that some favourable indication might occur. One day, at the end of six months of unavailing effort, he was unusually weary, and did not read. He soon discovered that the child was uneasy, and was trying to move himself a little. The thought flashed across his mind: "He misses the sound of my voice." He brought his mouth near the child's hands, and, after repeated efforts, the little one succeeded in placing his fingers on the teacher's lips, as if to say, "Make that sound again." The teacher felt that from that moment his success was assured. And, as the narrative goes on to relate, only five years after that time, the child stood on a platform, in the presence of interested spectators, and answered with ready accuracy the questions of a public examination. The patience of love had conquered.[2]

¶ Yes, the ugly old church!—at first such a failure that Bishop Blomfield was wroth at its appearance,—though it cannot raise its head among the handsome churches of the metropolis, yet it has been the nursery of babes in Christ and the home of

[1] *The Life and Letters of John Cairns*, 588.

[2] T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, 122.

thousands who have reached a fuller age in Christian experience. I can say this without incurring the charge of egotism, for I am speaking of what the church had become before I knew it. The material fabric was the ugly, uninteresting building I have described. The church which was built up within it was a church of simple, honest souls, whose outlook on life had been raised to such a level that piety had discarded the temptation to be a sham, and a deep, earnest conviction of the reality of spiritual life had laid hold upon their hearts. They formed a society of true-hearted men and women who loved their Lord, and who strove, severally and unitedly, to do His will. The very atmosphere of the church and parish brought me a message which helped, while it humbled me. They were so much better than I—those devout and simple-minded souls to whom I was sent to minister. Whence had this atmosphere come? Under God, it was owing to the untiring and unique work of one man—the Rev. William Bell Mackenzie—my predecessor, and the first vicar of the church. Fidelity and fixity marked his life. He lived till he was sixty-four years of age. He had been ordained thirty-six years, and in that time he served but one curacy, St. James', Bristol, and one incumbency, St. James', Holloway. The thirty-two years at St. James', Holloway, were devoted to building up his flock in faith and love—a generation's work for the regeneration of the people. Slowly he gathered round him, not only an attached and appreciative congregation, but a band of trusty and faithful men and women, genuinely interested in the good of the parish and neighbourhood, and keenly alive to missionary responsibility.[1]

[1] W. Boyd Carpenter, *Some Pages of My Life*, 158.

My Lord and My God.

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My Lord and My God.

Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.—John xx. 28.

It was a strange confession this, to be addressed by a pious Jew, who knew the meaning of his faith, to the man Christ Jesus, with whom as man he had companied, with whom he had eaten and drunk, whom he had heard speak in human words through human lips. The Jew believed in a God who had created men, who worked through them and ruled them, who was conversant with all their ways, who spoke to them and had spoken through them. But it was a God who was more immeasurably distant than imagination could bridge, whose ways were higher than men's ways, and His thoughts than men's thoughts, as high as the heaven is from the earth. He had spoken through men, but it is in that very consciousness of the prophets that the distance between God and man becomes most significant. It emphasizes just where man is highest; for in proportion to man's goodness does he become conscious of his own sinfulness in the presence of the high and holy God. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"—that had been the cry of Isaiah. "Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak: for I am a child"—that had been the confession of Jeremiah's weakness. There was not one of these holy men of God who, if we had proposed to offer him the sort of reverence that is due to God, would have hesitated for a moment to rebuke it in the language of St. Peter, "Stand up; for I myself also am a man." The last of the prophets, he who is called greater than the prophets, is conspicuous for this self-effacement in the presence of God, though in his case he took off the glory of his prophetic crown to cast it at the feet of Christ.

Truly a strange confession this, to see one who knew the meaning of his belief in the one and only unapproachable God, and hear him speak to One who was truly Son of Man, truly Jesus of Nazareth, in the words "My Lord and my God."

1. The text forms the climax of the Fourth Gospel. It is St. John's answer to the question, "Who then is this?" That question was asked by the people when Christ stayed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. They were astonished without measure, we are told, and said one to another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Four answers have been given to that question.

(1) First there is the answer which the people themselves gave. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" they said. He was one of themselves. He had been born in Bethlehem; He had followed His father's trade; He had lived amongst them, and they believed that they knew Him. They knew Him and all His kindred: "Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?" He simply made an addition of one to the population of the town of Nazareth.

And this answer is given still. In our day there is scarcely a more popular answer than this. Jesus is a man; He makes an addition of one to the population of the world. He is a man, it is added, of supreme ability, originality, and earnestness. He is a man of most exceptional goodness. Those who make this answer have a little difficulty in agreeing as to just how good He was. Some go so far as to say that He seems to have been sinless, or at any rate that nothing sinful is reported of Him. But most will not go so far as that. They cannot believe that any man whose father and mother we know could be sinless.

In the shop of Nazareth
Pungent cedar haunts the breath.
'Tis a low Eastern room,
Windowless, touched with gloom.
Workman's bench and simple tools
Line the walls. Chests and stools,
Yoke of ox, and shaft of plow,
Finished by the Carpenter,
Lie about the pavement now.

In the room the Craftsman stands,
Stands and reaches out His hands.

Let the shadows veil His face
If you must, and dimly trace
His workman's tunic, girt with bands
At His waist. But His hands—
Let the light play on them;
Marks of toil lay on them.
Paint with passion and with care
Every old scar showing there
Where a tool slipped and hurt;
Show each callous; be alert
For each deep line of toil.
Show the soil
Of the pitch; and the strength
Grip of helve gives at length.
When night comes, and I turn
From my shop where I earn
Daily bread, let me see
Those hard hands—know that He
Shared my lot, every bit;
Was a man, every whit.

Could I fear such a hand
Stretched toward me? Misunderstand
Or mistrust? Doubt that He
Meets me in full sympathy?
"Carpenter! hard like Thine
Is this hand—this of mine:
I reach out, gripping Thee,
Son of man, close to me,
Close and fast, fearlessly."

(2) The second answer is made by God. "This is my beloved Son." The people of Nazareth claimed Him as theirs. He is one of us, they said. God's answer is, He is not yours, He is Mine. The time may come when He will be yours also; He is not yours yet. He will be yours when you know that He is not simply an addition of one to the population of Nazareth; He will be yours when you know that He is not merely a man, but the Son of man. Meanwhile He is Mine; He is the Son of God. This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

This answer is not so popular in our day. It is not so compre-

hensive; it is said to be not so comforting. The great merit, we are told, of regarding Jesus as simply one of us is that we can then be sure of His sympathy. But is it enough to be sure of His sympathy? Must we not also be sure of His power? It is one thing to know that He is willing; is He also able to help us in every time of need? He who is the beloved Son of God has all the sympathy for us that the kindest-hearted man could have; and, much more than that, He is able to succour them that are tempted.

¶ When our Lord Jesus Christ became Man, He identified Himself with humanity, in all its weakness, in all its sorrow, and (in a figure) in all its sin. An unflagging outpouring of sympathy, an untiring energy of benevolence, a continuous oblation of self-sacrifice—*that* was the life of the Son of Man upon earth. Many a man has borne his poverty more bravely because Jesus Himself was poor; again and again it has helped men in the furnace of temptation to think that

> He knows what sore temptations mean,
> For He has felt the same.

And the mourner in dark and lonely hours has found comfort in the remembrance that Jesus wept at a human grave, and knows all the bitter longings of his soul.[1] His question still, to every sufferer who needs relief, to every sinner who needs pardon, is, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" And the reply still is, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

(3) The third answer is again the answer of the people—"This is indeed the Saviour of the world." It was the answer given by those Samaritans who had discovered for themselves that Jesus could both sympathize and deliver. It was the answer of those who had had personal experience of His saving grace and power. "Now we believe," they said to the woman of Samaria, "not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." They had taken the answer of the inhabitants of Nazareth and the answer of God the Father and had put them together. He was both the carpenter and God's Son.

And this is the final answer. There is no possibility of going beyond it. The answer of the inhabitants of Nazareth is short-sighted and very partial. God's answer is partial also, since it has

[1] S. C. Lowry, *Lent Sermons on the Passion*, 55.

to wait our response before it can be made complete. But it is not short-sighted. It has within it the promise, as it has the potency, of the salvation of the world. It is God's own expression of the momentous fact of history: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." It only waits for that fact to have its fulfilment—"that whosoever believeth on him may not perish but have everlasting life." The answer of the people of Samaria is complete and it is final. All that has yet to be done is to have its contents declared and appropriated. What does Saviour involve? And how is the Saviour of the world to be recognised as mine?

(4) Thomas declared its contents. The Saviour of the world is both Lord and God. He is Lord, for He is a man. The inhabitants of Nazareth knew that. He is also the supreme man. They did not know that; and when He claimed it they took Him to the brow of their hill to cast Him down headlong. Thomas had discovered that Jesus is Son of man, the representative Man, the Man to whom every man owes obedience. But He is also God. The people of Nazareth did not know that He was God: but God the Father knew—"This is my beloved Son." That also was contained in the title which the Samaritans gave Him—"the Saviour of the world"—though they did not bring it out, and probably were not aware of it. Thomas brought it out, knowing as he did that no man, if he is only man, can save his brother or give to God a ransom for him.

But Thomas not only declared the contents of the Samaritans' confession, he appropriated them. He said, "*My* Lord and *my* God"; from which we see that he was led along a path of his own, through his own personal experience, to this appropriation.

2. Now this is the confession to which the Fourth Gospel has been leading up. St. John began with the statement that the Word was God. He showed at once that he identified the Word with Jesus of Nazareth, for he said that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Then he proceeded with the rest of the life of Jesus, selecting his incidents in order to show that he was right in identifying Jesus with the Word. He came quite early to the people of Samaria, who said, "This is the Saviour of the world." But that was not definite enough; it was not individual enough.

He proceeded with the life, recording its wonderful words and wonderful works, till he came to the death and the resurrection of Jesus. He reached his climax and conclusion in the confession of Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Then he brought his Gospel to an end with that frank expression of the purpose of it—"These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name."

3. Is it not a remarkable thing that this confession was made by Thomas? We speak of Thomas as the doubter. Is it not astonishing that the doubting Thomas should have been he that rose to that great height of faith, and was able to say "My Lord and my God"? It may be that we are not so much astonished at it as our fathers were. Tennyson has taught us to believe that doubt may not be undesirable. At least he has taught us to repeat comfortably his words—

> There is more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.

But even to us it is surely a surprise to find that that man whom we have looked upon as most reluctant of all the Apostles to make the venture of faith, makes at last a venture which must, we think, have startled the rest of the Apostles as they heard it, calling this Jesus with whom they had companied all these days not only Lord but also God. But let us see if Thomas was the common doubter we have taken him for. We know very little of his history. Almost all we know from the Gospels is contained in four sayings.

(1) The first saying was uttered on the occasion of the death of Lazarus. Jesus and His disciples had left Judæa for fear of the Jews when word reached them in their seclusion that Lazarus was dead. Jesus announced His intention of returning to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The disciples remonstrated. "The Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" When Jesus persisted, "Let us also go," said Thomas, "that we may die with him." These are not the words of a vulgar doubter. They are the words of a man who counts the cost. If he errs in counting the cost too deliberately, at any rate he falls into fewer mistakes than the impulsive Peter. And it is the more

creditable to him that, counting the cost so carefully, he makes so brave a decision as this.

(2) The second saying is spoken in the Upper Room. Jesus was trying to prepare the disciples for the impending separation. He was going away. They knew where He was going, did they not? "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." But they did not know; and it was Thomas who uttered their ignorance: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest: and how can we know the way?" There is neither doubt nor conspicuous caution in the words; there is simply the mind of the practical man who is willing to go where he has to go but would like to see the way.

(3) It is from the third saying that Thomas has obtained the name of doubter. Jesus had risen from the dead, but Thomas could not believe it. No more could the rest believe it until they had evidence before them. Thomas happened to be absent when they had it, and he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." With such an expression of determined disbelief to his credit, it is not to be wondered at that Thomas has received the name of doubting Thomas. Yet these are scarcely the words of a man who doubts habitually. They are rather the determination of a cautious and practical man to make sure that he has evidence enough to go upon. And God never refuses any man sufficient evidence. A few days afterwards Jesus offered Thomas the very evidence that he demanded. Thomas was wrong in relying so entirely on the evidence of the senses, and he was rebuked for that. "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." But it is to the glory of Thomas that when he did obtain sufficient evidence he believed with all his heart. As soon as he understood, he trusted; as soon as he knew, he loved. He needed no more than the evidence of the Resurrection to prove the Divinity. He made the great leap of faith and threw himself personally into the arms of a personal Saviour—"My Lord and my God."

(4) "My Lord and my God." This is the fourth saying of Thomas that we know. Thomas the doubter has left his doubt behind. He has outstripped his fellow-disciples. He has outstripped even the impetuous Peter, whose great confession, "Thou

art the Christ, the Son of the living God," lacks the personal appropriation that marks the difference between insight and faith.

¶ Men have generally passed on Thomas a very severe judgment. The Church, for ages, has branded *infidel* on his brow. But this judgment is one that is not justified by the facts, and cannot be entertained by us. At all times and even to this day people are quite ready to scatter such epithets about with an open hand. It is an easy and complacent way of disposing of men. But it is often a shallow enough device. We show thereby but little insight into the nature of men or of God. If we could look into the hearts of those whom we so fling away from us, we should often find deep enough sorrows there, struggles to which we ourselves are strangers, wrestlings for truth and light without receiving it, and yearnings pent up and hidden from the general eye.[1]

¶ There is not one believer who is not assailed by moments of doubt, of doubt of the existence of God. These doubts are not harmful: on the contrary, they lead to the highest comprehension of God. That God whom I knew became familiar to me, and I no longer believed in Him. A man believes fully in God only when He is revealed anew to him, and He is revealed to man from a new side, when He is sought with a man's whole soul.[2]

They bade me cast the thing away,
They pointed to my hands all bleeding,
They listened not to all my pleading;
The thing I meant I could not say;
I knew that I should rue the day
If once I cast that thing away.

I grasped it firm, and bore the pain;
The thorny husks I stripped and scattered;
If I could reach its heart, what mattered
If other men saw not my gain,
Or even if I should be slain?
I knew the risks; I chose the pain.

O, had I cast that thing away,
I had not found what most I cherish,
A faith without which I should perish,—
The faith which, like a kernel, lay
Hid in the husks which on that day
My instinct would not throw away![3]

[1] A. B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, 322.
[2] Tolstoy, *Works*, xvi. 418.
[3] Helen Hunt Jackson.

4. How did Thomas reach his great confession? He reached it through the Death and the Resurrection. These are the two events which have occurred between the time when Thomas with the rest of the disciples forsook Him and fled, and the time when he said, "My Lord and my God."

(1) He obtained "My Lord" first. The resurrection of Jesus gave him that directly. For Jesus had claimed the mastery, and to that claim God had now set His seal by raising Him from the dead. It was the simple confession of the Messiahship. His death seemed to show that He had made the claim unwarrantably, but the resurrection proved that He had made it with the approbation of God.

¶ The title "Lord" as used at the time, had little more significance than the title "Sir," as we use it in addressing men to-day. But as it fell from the lips of this man, I think I am right in saying that it came with a full and rich and spacious meaning. I do not think for a moment you can differ from me when I say that when Thomas on that occasion said, "My Lord," in that word he recognized the sovereignty of Christ over his own life, and did by that word yield himself in willing submission to that sovereignty.[1]

(2) But "Lord" alone may be useless. "Ye call me Master and Lord," said Jesus, "but ye do not the things which I say." And again, He warned them that many would say to Him "Lord, Lord," to whom He would have to make the reply that He never knew them. To "My Lord" it is necessary to add "My God."

Thomas obtained "My Lord" from Jesus' resurrection. He found "My God" in His death and resurrection combined. We are apt to think that he must have found "My God" in the power which Jesus possessed or in the authority which He wielded; in His miracles or in His teaching. But His life and work could do no more than show that Jesus *might* be God. What proved Him to be God indeed was His suffering and death followed by His resurrection. For now it was evident that He need not have suffered and need not have died. It was evident that He had suffered and died purely out of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." It needs the love of God to lay down one's life for one's enemies. "God

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "God is love," and the Man who could not save Himself as He hung upon the cross could be nothing less than God.

¶ If the conclusion that Jesus was God was based merely upon the fact of resurrection, I declare that it was not justified. Resurrection did not demonstrate deity. The Hebrew Scriptures told of resurrection of certain men from the dead. Put these out of mind if you can. Thomas had seen three dead ones come to life during the ministry of Jesus. He had seen Him raise the child of Jairus; he had seen the son of the widow of Nain given back to his mother after he had been laid upon the bier; and he had seen the raising of Lazarus, but he did not stand in the presence of Lazarus and say, My Lord and my God, because Lazarus was alive from the dead. If the confession was merely the result of resurrection, then I declare it was not justified. The fact that Christ was risen from among the dead is not enough to base the doctrine of His deity upon. But, as a sequence to all that had preceded it, I claim that he was justified. In that hour when Thomas became convinced that the One he had seen dead was alive from among the dead, there came back again to him with gathered force, focused into one clear bright hour of illumination, all the facts in the life and ministry that had preceded that resurrection.[1]

¶ Faith is not belief in fact, demonstration, or promise; it is sensibility to the due influence of the fact, something that enables us to act upon the fact, the susceptibility to all the strength that is in the fact, so that we are controlled by it. Nobody can properly define this. All we can say is that it comes by the grace of God, and that failure to see the truth is not so lamentable as failure to be moved by it.[2]

[1] G. Campbell Morgan. [2] Mark Rutherford.

Believing Without Seeing.

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Believing Without Seeing.

Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.—John xx. 29.

1. These words of our Lord to Thomas add one more beatitude to those with which the Sermon on the Mount began. He had already taught to men the blessedness of humility, of meekness, of purity, of peace, not only in the beautiful phrases which we know so well, but chiefly by the example of His life. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. . . . Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God." And now, when His earthly ministry is over, and when He is about to return to the majesty of His glory, He leaves as one parting benediction to those who love and follow Him, even to all who love and follow to the best of their powers the things that are good: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The benediction of faith; it is one of the last messages of the Risen Lord to His Church, and it brings fresh consolation and strength from age to age in correspondence with the varying needs and perplexities of mankind.

2. What is blessedness? It is spiritual happiness. It is that deep calm of gladness which is spiritual in its origin and in its maintenance. This is the heritage of those who, not having seen, yet have believed. And it is the higher blessedness. It is contrastive. Thomas had insisted on sight as an aid to faith. The concession was granted to him. He saw the Risen One, and believing, cried in a passion of adoration, "My Lord and my God!" And he was blessed. Every one who believes is blessed. But his was not the supreme blessedness. "Jesus saith unto him,

Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." That is the crowning blessedness. They have the noblest beatitude who have not seen, and yet have believed.

¶ When Dr. Arnold was suddenly stricken with his mortal agony, he was seen, we are told, lying still with "his hands clasped, his lips moving, and his eyes raised upwards, as if engaged in prayer, when all at once he repeated, firmly and earnestly, 'Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'"[1]

I.

The Seen and the Unseen.

That sense perception is at the basis of all our knowledge is one of those axioms with which we are all familiar, even though we have never read a word of philosophy. In the common language of daily life we are accustomed to assertions of assured knowledge, by a reference to the experience of one or other of our five senses. Two of them, those of sight and touch, are indeed the criteria which we apply to knowledge of all kinds. "It is evident," or, "It is palpable," are the two chief phrases which, through many variations, are the signs we use for certitude. If we wish to describe the illusory or doubtful, we invariably deny in some form or another that they can be seen or felt. They are imperceptible or intangible, unseen by the eye or unfelt by the hand, and as such are viewed with suspicion or rejected with incredulity. Tennyson has expressed a common conviction when he says, "Knowledge is of things we see," and contrasts it with faith. To many the difference between faith and knowledge is the difference between the unknown and the known, and much of the agnosticism of the present day is largely due to this conception that the senses are not *a* means, but the *only* means of obtaining assured knowledge.

To certain types of mind, however, the limitations of sense perception are as remarkable as the range of their operations, and the conception of limiting knowledge to the impressions of sense,

[1] B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Lord*, 102.

and the mind's working on those impressions, is one which presents insuperable difficulties. They are quite conscious of the inestimable debt the mind owes to the senses, but they refuse to believe that the mind cannot pass into regions which are for ever beyond the reach of the senses, or that it cannot arrive at truth except as the object is presented to it by means of the senses. They are conscious that there is a region which is essentially metaphysical, in which the mind moves, not as it is guided or impelled by the senses, but by the laws of its own being, and that the goal at which it arrives by strict obedience to those laws is knowledge in the highest and best sense, even though inaccessible to sense perception. In some cases the goal arrived at can be tested by the senses, but whether tested or untested, the reality is the same. The discovery of the planet Neptune by the mind before it was brought within the range of telescopic vision, affords an illustration of what is here meant. It was the operation of the mind, working according to its own laws, that established the existence of Neptune, before the telescope discovered it. The mind, in fact, in this case aided the senses, instead of being aided by them. It is true that the mind was here working only on the data presented to it by the senses, but its working was based upon the assumption that a previous intelligence had been at work in the constitution of the universe, and that the working of that Mind was in harmony with the laws of our own minds. This, in fact, is scientific faith as distinct from scientific knowledge. It has been arrived at by means of sense perception, but it is none the less faith, as distinct from knowledge.

Our great advance in knowledge is due to our walking by faith as well as by sight. Experience has shown us that what is conforms to reason, and we therefore conclude that whatever conforms to reason exists, whether it has come within the range of sense perception or not. If the senses have not yet discovered it, we search for it with the belief that sooner or later we shall find it. The atomic theory prophesies the existence of elements which have never come within the range of sense perception, and recent discoveries have simply filled up the places which were vacant, and revealed what faith had already perceived. Science has shown us that what is ought to be, and it cannot escape creating the suspicion that what ought to be actually is, whether we per-

ceive it or not. The distinction between faith and knowledge, therefore, is imperfectly described as the difference between the unknown and the known; it is more accurately described as the difference between anticipated and realized knowledge. Knowledge is not only of things we see, but of things we foresee. The mind may anticipate the senses and believe even where the senses cannot see. If this is true in the sphere of the physical, the presumption is that it is equally true in the metaphysical sphere.

1. What is the value of the evidence of the senses?

(1) The best answer is to consider what must have been the impression left upon the mind of the Jew when for the first time he saw Jesus of Nazareth, with His attendant followers, passing through the streets of Jerusalem. To answer this we must try to place ourselves in his position. Let us, for example, suppose that we were to see passing through one of our streets an excited crowd of men, women and children of the middle and lower classes. Let us imagine ourselves listening to the discordant acclamations of a multitude, many of whom we might perhaps know to be ignorant, and some to have led immoral lives. Let us dismiss from our fancy all those picturesque surroundings of eastern buildings, of palms and of flowing coloured garments, with which the magic of Christian art has invested such a scene. These representations of the past, so far as they are real, have for us of the present day a certain charm—just because of their strange and foreign aspect—which they could not have had for those whose lives were spent among such scenes. Let us eliminate from our conception of such an incident the majestic harmonies in which Christian musicians have rendered the Hosannas of the crowd. In other words, let us suppose ourselves looking at and listening to something unhallowed by those associations which of necessity give fascination to the far-off past, and let us consider ourselves face to face with the bare, unadorned, unsensational realities of the present. Let us go a step further. Let us imagine the central figure in such a scene to be one not distinguishable by his dress or, it may be, by any special form or comeliness from those about him—one whose place of birth and station in life and opportunities for education are known to us, and are not in our opinion such as to warrant us in looking for any special refine-

ment of manner or display of learning on his part. And, lastly, let us suppose that all we have ourselves heard of his teaching has led us to regard that teaching as, to say the least of it, an innovation on the divinely-given statutes of the past. Let us try then to put ourselves in the position of the Jew of our Lord's time, and we must, in all fairness, confess that there was much in his special surroundings that was not favourable to a ready belief in the Divine mission of the Galilean peasant.

(2) And yet the evidence of the senses has its value, and it is no light one. The change that came over the Apostles after the Resurrection has an ever accumulating force, ceaselessly advancing. As we read the Epistles, does it not strike us that the writers are living in what the world may count a dream, but is to us the opening of a new view of human life, a realization of what prophecy had foretold? They who went about the world preaching the Gospel to every creature, having given up everything that the world counts dear, facing danger of every sort, tempests, cold and hunger, prisons and suffering, and death, did they not show an intense conviction, such a conviction as has never in the world's history been surpassed, and a conviction lasting for long, long years, showing itself in their every act and deed? Now this conviction rests on what they had seen.

¶ The evidence of things seen is always evidence. I was asked this question in the city a few days ago: There stands the Cross on the top of St. Paul's Cathedral. How did it get there? It is a question you had better ask your sceptical friend next time he argues with you. I would far rather have to uphold the position in a free debate that the reason why that Cross, the old gallows — and it was nothing more than the old gallows—is brandished in triumph over the biggest city in the world was because the Person who died on it rose again than have to defend any other explanation in the world, for, as a matter of fact, there is no other explanation. Why did a body of Jews, the most conservative race in the world, change their sacred day from Saturday —not to Friday—oh no, not to Friday—but to Sunday? There is no explanation, except that the Person who died on the Friday rose on the Sunday. Why did a body which called themselves "The Christians" celebrate for nearly two thousand years in their Eucharist, which is their thanksgiving service, the tokens of a shameful death—"body broken, blood shed"? There never has been any explanation except that something happened so glorious,

so transfiguring, that it changed the shameful death into a badge of glory.[1]

(3) But the evidence of the seen goes only a certain way. For what is sense but the medium through which we converse with this visible and lower world, with its phenomena, its motions, its operations, and its changes? The sphere and ken of sense is scanty and limited; it reaches only to the outer surface, beyond which sense cannot penetrate. Sense needs the reason to be its interpreter and guide; for, with all its confidence, sense is blind. Without the higher light of reason, the laws, principles, causes, and conditions of all it sees, handles, and knows, are unknown. And yet the reason in its sphere is bounded too. A world of intellectual objects, the phenomena of a higher but not the highest sphere, are within its ken. The unseen and the Eternal are beyond its gaze: and of these, except by another faculty higher than sense or reason, supernatural in its substance and its acts, which comes in to perfect both, we know nothing. It is not by sense or by reason, but by faith, elevating both, that the truths of the Kingdom of God are known and believed.

¶ There is no slight amount of peril in matters of religion in demanding more evidence than can actually be given. Men formerly used to say, "Write the Gospel—the Divine message—in letters of fire along the sky, and I will believe." They say now, "Give me mathematical demonstration—make the whole thing as plain as a problem in geometry—and then it will be impossible for me to withhold my assent." But this has to be considered, that we have hardly the right to require the Creator to give us the amount of evidence that we think fit to ask for. What He will do in this way, is surely for Him and not for us to settle. And if He should give, as He does, sufficient evidence to make unbelief inexcusable—sufficient evidence to enable us to believe, if we are not determined to disbelieve—I do not see what we have to complain of.[2]

¶ To a man who wrote to him saying that he was dying of an incurable disease, and could not accept the Christian faith, Bishop Creighton replied: "There can be no *convincing proof* of anything that affects our inner character. What 'convincing proof' have you that your wife loves you or your child? Yet you believe it, and that belief is more real to you than anything

[1] Bishop A. F. W. Ingram, *Secrets of Strength*, 57.
[2] G. Calthrop, *In Christ*, 213.

that you know or can prove. Religion must be a matter of belief, not of proof. It depends on a consciousness of the relation between our soul and God. Immortality depends on the knowledge of the meaning of our soul's life which we obtain from looking at it in the light of God. The more we find our soul, the more readily do we see God in the person of Jesus Christ. Look back upon your own life, your growth, the traces of Providence, the presence of God's love. Do you think that all this wonderful process can come to an abrupt end?"[1]

(4) The evidence of sense is not always applicable. Religion is not a proposition to be proved like a problem in Euclid. As to mathematical demonstration, the subject, in the nature of things, is not capable of it. Were it a matter for the head alone it would be different; but the heart is concerned in the matter. You have the two factors—the head and the heart—to deal with; and in the case of religion, there is no possibility of so binding the heart down, by any conceivable process whatever, that it should not be capable of resistance if it should choose to resist.

¶ The following is from the pen of a well-known London physician and scientist of the present day, one who for many years was a Catholic:—"What men of science 'want' in order to believe in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is this. In one word, it is *proof*, or evidence—what we can prove by experiment, inductive reasoning, and verification that we *know*. As Bithell says, 'The man of science has learned to believe in justification, not by faith, but by verification, therefore he nurses no illusions, does not say he knows when he does not and cannot know and follow the evidence whithersoever it leads him.' If I had been St. Thomas I should have wanted (1) the death-certificate of a medical man who had watched the case to the end; (2) proof that the doors were not only 'shut,' but locked and bolted on the inside; and (3) I should have carefully examined the wound in the side to ascertain whether heart, lungs, liver, or any other vital organ had been perforated, and whether what I saw was an apparition, or a spirit, or a body with 'flesh and bones,' and if the latter, I should have said, 'This was never a *dead* body.' It is seriously doubted by some writers whether either Lazarus or Christ was really dead, and some believe that, in the case of Christ, restoratives were administered by the women in the sepulchre. There is no evidence *that would satisfy* a lawyer or scientist either (1) that Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, or (2) that

[1] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. 253.

Jesus Christ Himself rose from the dead, and that afterwards His crucified body, with its wounds, entered a room the doors of which were shut."[1]

2. After all that the senses can do there remains the unseen, and faith must make its venture. All the greatest works of man have been works of faith; and those who have had most insight, and have followed the guidance of that insight till it led them to great truths, are the men who have taken the leading part in the history of our race. It is faith that incites the soldier and sailor to noble acts, faith in their commander. Perhaps the grandest discovery made by man was the opening of a vast continent; and it was faith that led Columbus across the untried and unknown seas. This is the natural view of faith, and St. Paul, tracing the history of the saints of old, marks how the animating principle of life to them was faith. And what led God to choose the Israelites as the nation through which He would reveal Himself to the world was the readiness of their faith, their adherence to the promises and their continued trust, through all the ages of countless trials—the long years of their waiting, ever filled with the "great cloud of witnesses," who without seeing yet believed, into whose possessions we have entered, as the children of a higher faith, and disciples who have learnt at the feet of a greater Master —of the ever-growing host of which it may be truly said in the words of the text, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

From the soft south the constant bird comes back,
  Faith-led, to find the welcome of the Spring
  In the old boughs whereto she used to cling,
Before she sought the unknown southward track:
Above the Winter and the storm-cloud's wrack
  She hears the prophecy of days that bring
  The Summer's pride, and plumes her homeward wing
To seek again the joys that exiles lack.
Shall I of little faith, less brave than she,
  Set forth unwillingly my goal to find,
  Go home from exile with reluctant mind,
Distrust the steadfast stars I cannot see,
  And doubt the heavens because my eyes are blind?
Nay! Give me faith, like wings, to soar to Thee![2]

[1] M. Fuller, *In Terrâ Pax*, 94.

[2] Louise Chandler Moulton.

II.

Faith in the Unseen.

Faith in the unseen is not an abrupt experience, unconnected with the experience of the senses. It is true that morality and religion cannot be treated in the same way as the physical sciences. They have their own data, which are not material but spiritual. If they are realities, however, they must be intelligible; they must follow similar laws to those which reign in the material realm, or at any rate they must follow law, and not be the result of chance. In the sphere of morals the good must be the reasonable; actions must be justifiable. In the sphere of religion, beliefs must be reasonable; the data upon which they are founded must be consistent with the working of the Divine mind, as that is already known to us in other spheres.

1. Faith in the unseen is *belief in more than we can see.*—It is quite true that "faith cometh by hearing." Faith, that is to say, is the proper correlative of testimony. But the evidence of testimony is not sufficient to command assent, even in the affairs of this world, unless the mind brings something of its own to co-operate with it. In belief it is at least approximately true, that "we receive but what we give." The element which the mind contributes to the formation of religious belief must be sought for in the depths of our moral being. Faith, then, may be described as the product of the outward evidence on which it rests, and the inward conditions which dispose us to admit it. It follows that if the product be constant, the two factors will vary in an inverse ratio; or, in other words, that the moral element requisite to produce religious conviction must be at least strong enough to supply the deficiencies in the external evidence.

"Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed." So spake our Lord. What, then, did Thomas believe? He believed much more than he saw. Had he merely believed in the resurrection, there would have been no blessing attaching to such faith. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." It is the vision whereby faith contemplates the unseen that is the real source of blessing. When St. Thomas heard the

words which showed how Jesus had all along been reading his heart, he at once accepted the fulness of the Divine truth. He exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"

St. John illustrates this higher condition of mind that believes without seeing. When he came to the grave of Jesus, whither Mary Magdalene had summoned him and Peter, "he saw and believed." Apparently all that he saw was the empty sepulchre, and the place where the dead body had lain. No vision of angels greeted him, nor did the Lord of death appear. A form rose up before him, as he looked, but it was the Lord of life with the light around Him of the days that had gone. The empty sepulchre could have told him little, but Jesus coming thither through the years told him much. Words that had bewildered found their explanation now. The enigma of the life and death found their solution at last. Not thus could he have seen, had not the habits of his mind prepared him. Candid, gracious, pure, truth-loving, sympathetic with the Divine purpose, free from prejudices and open-minded, the perceptive capacity was able to take the place of sight. And so thought, reflection, reasoning, imagination, all blended in a process at once mental and spiritual, by which, as by a higher vision, he saw what the eye could not see, yet not less clearly and distinctly.

¶ His work [*The Grammar of Assent*] included an analysis of the mind of believer and unbeliever and of the differences between them. He drew attention to the subtle personal appreciation, on the part of the religious mind, which made it find so much more evidence for Christianity in the acknowledged facts of its history than the irreligious mind could see. The general outcome of this portion of the book was to show the important place held by antecedent conditions among the reasons convincing the believer. And among these conditions were the experiences and action of the individual mind. The religious mind instinctively and by degrees accumulated evidences of which the irreligious mind—reasoning on different principles—remained wholly or partially unaware. The action of the will and of moral dispositions was gradual. Moral defect must in the long run lead the mind to miss the deepest grounds of belief. But this was something very different from insincerity. To quote a sentence written by Newman on the subject to the present writer, "The religious mind sees much which is invisible to the irreligious mind. They have not the same evidence before them."

Newman did not deny that one reasoned rightly, the other wrongly. He did not deny that there might be responsibility for the false principles which led to unbelief—for the failure of the unbeliever to recognize the deeper principles which a Christian thinker adopts (as he phrased it a little later) "under the happy guidance of the moral sense." But he did away with the old contrast to which Protestants as well as Catholics had long been accustomed, between believer and unbeliever as men looking at and apprehending precisely the same evidence, which was so obviously cogent that only a man whose will was here and now perverse could disbelieve. He substituted a far subtler analysis in which circumstances and education played their part in the power of mental vision on the particular subject: in which the appreciation of reasons was personal, and gradual; religious earnestness and true principles being necessary not only to the acceptance of the reasoning for Christianity, but to its adequate apprehension.[1]

> One must have King-recognizing eyes
> To recognize the King in mean disguise.[2]

¶ My soul, do not pray for too little. Do not imagine that mere things will make thee blessed. No outward contact with any visible beauty would satisfy thee for an hour. The unseen alone will content thee. The things that belong unto thy peace are not worlds of space. They perish but thou remainest, they all wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shall they be folded up, but thou art the same. Ask that which is invisible, eternal, commensurate with thyself—love, sacrificial love, love even for the loveless. Ask the pain of beholding pain, the joy of seeing joy, the hope of bringing hope. *That* is to touch the print of the nails, for that is to bear in the spirit the marks of the Lord Jesus.[3]

2. Faith in the unseen is *believing what we have never seen at all.*—"Now faith is the substance (the assurance, R.V.) of things hoped for, the evidence (proving, R.V.) of things not seen." That is to say, it is the faculty which reaches to that which is beyond the sense, yet which apprehends it as certain—as being as certain as the things which we see.

Men have never seen God. The astronomer said, "I have

[1] Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, ii. 247.
[2] Jalaluddin Rumi, in *A Little Book of Eastern Wisdom*, 19.
[3] G. Matheson, *My Aspirations.*

swept the heavens with my telescope, and I have not found God." He looked for God as for a star, and could not find Him. A voice spoke from those heavens which the astronomer did not hear, and it said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And thousands upon thousands of trustful souls who would never look for God through a telescope have found Him with their hearts, and they face the fight of life every day bravely, knowing that He goes down to the battle with them; they lie down to rest at night feeling there is One who neither slumbers nor sleeps; if they are out in the raging tempest they sing, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"; if they go through places of danger and terror they hear a voice say, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee"; and while the learned astronomer says he cannot find God, these simple souls say, "'Tis blessed to believe."

¶ One of the most interesting and romantic discoveries of last century in the realm of astronomy was the detection of the planet Neptune, the outermost of those "wanderers" which circle round the sun. Until the year 1846 the furthest planet known was Uranus, discovered by Sir William Herschel some fifty years before this date. Study of the movements of Uranus showed variations from the path which, on the known data, it ought to follow; and these variations could not be accounted for by the attraction of any of the inner planets upon its mass. Two astronomers, one in England, and one in France, began almost simultaneously to investigate the problem presented by its perturbations. By long and arduous calculations involving profound mathematical research, they found that the facts presented by the variations of the known planet could be explained by the presence of an unseen neighbour beyond it, of a certain mass and following a particular path. They knew that nothing else could account for the phenomena with which they had to deal. Although they had not seen another planet in the telescope or demonstrated its existence beyond doubt until their researches were confirmed: yet they believed in its existence. They saw it "as Columbus saw America from the shores of Spain." They "felt its movements trembling along the far-reaching line of their analysis." And when they finished their calculations and indicated the spot in the heavens where the new member of the system would be found, the observers pointed their telescopes to the skies: and at the very place foretold the "new planet swam into their ken."[1]

[1] See Ball, *The Story of the Heavens*, ch. xv.

¶ We have none of us seen Christ in the flesh. At times we judge ourselves disadvantaged thereby. But no! Christ says we are supremely advantaged. We are blessed with a distinctive blessedness. We have really lost nothing by not being alive when Christ was incarnate here. Oh, how we should like to have seen Him! If we could have basked in His smile, or heard His voice, or even felt the rustle of His seamless robe as He flitted past us on the highway! Had we seen we would indeed have believed! Ah! so we reason. But it is a meaner faith which is so inspired. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." What is true of believing Christ is true concerning all the spiritual objects of faith. God. The heavenly home. Any spiritual truth. The quality which draws down beatitude is a faith which is independent of materialistic props.[1]

Faith is—not sight,
It boasts not of the sun at noonday bright,
While groping in the starlight haze of night.

Nor Dogma proud,
Fierce vaunting of all Truth in accents loud,
Beguiling with bold words th' unthinking crowd.

Nor Science known,
Seated in queenly robes upon her throne,
Meting the boundless with her claspèd zone.

Nor Certainty,
The overweening claim that Truth must be
What we forecast from what we hear and see.

Faith does but muse
With heed upon the data she *must* use,
Nor Likelihood's fair claim durst she refuse.

Faith does but think
That walking on the Infinite's dread brink,
She dare not mete its chain by one small link.

Faith does but feel
That what she deems all dimly, may be real,
On her blind guess she will not set Truth's seal.

Faith doth but hope
She shall see clear—whereas she doth but grope—
When earth's dark vistas widen to heaven's scope.

[1] D. T. Young, *The Crimson Book*, 55.

She doth but will
The healthful impulses she would instil
May, by heaven's prospering, all good fulfil.

She can but trust
Her wistful craving for the True and Just,
Not only *may* be realized but *must*.[1]

3. Faith may even be *believing that which seems contrary to sense*.—For there is in the heart of every human being an eternal opposition between the merely sceptical understanding and the spiritual faculty, between that which demonstrates and that which believes, between the mind which we share with the animal and the spirit which we believe we specially derive from God. These two are opposed one to the other. And that in us which says, "This *must* be so, this *shall* be so!" is a higher faculty than that which says, "*How* is this so? *Why* is this so?" and the act of faith on which our morality, our religion, our higher forms of being and living rest, is that by which we assert the supremacy of the one of these above the other.

No help in all the stranger-land,
O fainting heart, O failing hand?
There's a morning and a noon,
And evening cometh soon.

The way is endless, friendless? No;
God sitteth high to see below;
There's a morning and a noon,
And the evening cometh soon.

Look yonder on the purpling west
Ere long the glory and the rest.
There's a morning and a noon,
And the evening cometh soon.[2]

III.

The Blessedness of Faith in the Unseen.

Our Lord does not tell us why they are blessed who believe without seeing. He simply says they are blessed. This makes a

[1] John Owen. [2] J. V. Cheney.

marked difference between this blessing and those others which form the preface to the Sermon on the Mount. There in each case reasons are given; a specific reward is spoken of as bestowed upon each grace. The merciful are blessed, for they shall obtain mercy. The pure in heart are blessed, for theirs is the Vision of God, the All Holy and Pure. The peacemakers are blessed, for they shall be called the sons of God, who is the true Author of peace. The meek are blessed, for they shall inherit the earth; what has been called "the harvest of a quiet eye" is theirs; it is a reward that no man can take from them. And so on all through. But no special reward of faith is spoken of in the text. It is not said that the faithful and trusting soul is blessed, for it shall receive the consolations of hope and of assurance. We might, indeed, have expected that our Lord would have given us some such promise. The Psalmist had sung of the blessings of trust with no uncertain voice: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." More than one of the beatitudes take up the words of the Psalms, and fill them with a larger and a more gracious meaning; but there is no exact counterpart in the words of our Lord for the words of the Psalmist about faith. The blessing of faith in the New Testament is something higher than the temporal prosperity of which the pious Hebrew poet spoke as the lot of the faithful and the just; it is rather that abiding and deepening sense of God's mercy and truth for which we daily pray. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Faith is its own reward; and the law of faith is this: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given."

But it is possible to suggest certain advantages which belief without sight confers.

1. It gives us the assurance of a Risen Christ.

¶ Forty years ago a poet of genius, a man to whom this story of St. Thomas must, I think, have been almost as dear as it was to his great master, Dr. Arnold, conceives of a sudden awakening to the new and authentic tidings, "Christ is *not* risen." He speaks in lofty but kindly pity to the sad dupes of the now discredited faith; to the poor women who wept beside His tomb;

to the daughters of Jerusalem who wept as they saw Him pass to His Cross; to the simple men of Galilee who had stood gazing up into heaven as they fancied He ascended, and are now bidden to return to their boats and their nets; to humble and holy men of heart in ages yet to be who have surrendered their souls to a gracious-seeming lie:

> Eat, drink, and die, for we are souls bereaved:
> Of all the creatures under heaven's wide cope
> We are most hopeless, who had once most hope,
> And most beliefless, that had most believed.
>
> Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
> As of the unjust, also of the just—
> Yea of that Just One too!
> It is the one sad Gospel that is true,
> Christ is *not* risen!

This vision of the poet, awful as it is to a serious Christian, may set us all thinking to some purpose. It may lead us to commune with our hearts in our chamber, and be still. Let us probe our hearts, even if it pain us, with the question, What is the difference to me and to my friends or my children whether the Creed of Christendom is true or baseless; whether the morning greeting of Easter Day is, as throughout the vast Russian Empire, "Christ is Risen," or "Christ is not risen"; whether Jesus is or is not the Christ; whether the death on the Cross was the unjust execution of a good man or the sacrifice of the Incarnate God; whether the cry "It is finished" was His last, as it was certainly His dying word; whether, if He now speaks to us, He speaks, like any other of the departed, by His example and by His genius, or, with a claim which would be blasphemy if it were put forward by any other, speaks as a living King to the world, to the Church, and to each believing soul, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."[1]

2. It gives us the enjoyment of a living present Christ. For He has not, as some affect to think, left His people in this world of peril and trial, and taken His seat on the throne of His Father above, there enjoying a peerless but solitary glory—blessed in the full enjoyment of all heaven's honours and glory, but little concerned as to the happiness of His followers on earth. Far from it. His parting words are "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the

[1] H. M. Butler, *University and Other Sermons*, 51.

end of the ages." So He is ever in the midst of His Church, and with His own in this world. He walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and holds their ministry in His right hand. He is the light, power, and healing virtue of the gospel. He enters with His people into all their trials and tribulations. He so overrules the divergent affairs of their lot, that all things work together for their good. He has been lifted up on the cross and to the sky, that He might attract all men unto Him. He is the great moral and spiritual magnet drawing the world of mankind from the serving of sin to yield to the power of grace. And as the magnet converts those bodies on which it lays hold into magnets, which in turn draw others, so does Christ magnetize men that they in turn may transform others, imparting to them like power. So by a power extending beyond the range of His actual presence and visibility we receive blessing from Christ, though we see Him not.

Here, then, lies the central lesson of this revelation of the Risen Lord, the revelation of His spiritual presence, the revelation of man's spiritual sight. The truest, serenest, happiest faith is within our reach. We have not lost more than we have gained by the removal of the events of the Gospel history far from our own times. The last beatitude of the Gospel is the special endowment of the later Church. The testimony of sense given to the Apostles, like the testimony of word given to us, is but the starting-point of faith. The substance of faith is not a fact which we cannot explain away, or a conclusion which we cannot escape, but the personal apprehension of a living, loving Friend. And Christ still makes Himself known in His Church and in each believer's heart by words of peace. He is still with us the same as eighteen hundred years ago, unchanged and unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

¶ A manifold enjoyment of Christ is a large component of this blessedness. The believer draws such pure delight from the Lord in whom he trusts. How grandly St. Peter states it: "Whom having not seen *ye love*." The loving of Christ is such unalloyed pleasure. None can know the rapture save only they who experience it. "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, *ye rejoice*." And how splendid the quality of the joy; "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Joy in Christ! Joy that cannot be spoken! Joy shot through with glory! Is not

this blessedness? The so-inclusive enjoyment of Christ is a rich element in the believer's blessedness.[1]

3. It gives us the light and power of the Holy Spirit. We have not only an outward testimony; we have an inward witness beyond all that was ever bestowed on man before the day of Pentecost—the full illumination of the Kingdom of God. Before the ascension of our Divine Lord, we read that even Apostles knew not the Scriptures. Cleophas and his fellow "hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel"; and the eleven, at the hour of His ascension, asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They knew Christ after the flesh, and their faith was as yet obscure. Therefore our Lord said to them, "It is expedient for you that I go away"; for you the withdrawal of My visible presence is needful. "For if I go not away, the Paraclete will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you; and when he is come, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance." "The spirit of truth shall be with you and in you" for ever. And on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and His illumination filled their inmost soul: their whole intelligence was enlightened, a fountain of light sprang up from within, and truths already known were unfolded with new and deeper meanings. They saw the full mystery of the Kingdom of God, of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; of the love of the Father in the gift of His Son, of the Son in giving Himself to be made man to suffer and to die; of the Holy Ghost, who was already upon them and within them. They perceived that their Divine Master had ascended to sit down upon His Father's throne, crowned with power, to possess His Kingdom; and the whole earth to them was lightened with His glory.

"Where is your God?" they say;—
Answer them, Lord most Holy!
Reveal Thy secret way
Of visiting the lowly:
Not wrapped in moving cloud,
Or nightly-resting fire;
But veiled within the shroud
Of silent high desire.

[1] D. T. Young, *The Crimson Book*, 63.

Come not in flashing storm,
Or bursting frown of thunder:
Come in the viewless form
Of wakening love and wonder;—
Of duty grown divine,
The restless spirit, still;
Of sorrows taught to shine
As shadows of Thy will.

O God! the pure alone,—
E'en in their deep confessing,—
Can see Thee as their own,
And find the perfect blessing:
Yet to each waiting soul
Speak in Thy still small voice,
Till broken love's made whole,
And saddened hearts rejoice.[1]

4. It transfigures our character. The sense of transfigured character goes far to constitute this blessedness. He who believes thereby gains the secret of holiness. Faith is evermore the root of noble character. The man who believes becomes. His nature, already regenerated, is eternally being "changed from glory to glory." Is not this a large portion of Christian blessedness? Belief in manifested God secures Godlikeness.

All faith is incomplete that is the confession of our want of knowledge and our need for help, but the most complete faith is that which lifts the whole nature, vibrates the whole man, which is felt at heart, and shown in action. When faith begins with the easy acceptance of some statements, or from admitting certain arguments, there is danger that it ends there; but when one is guided upwards by a wish for higher life and help, when the spirit is crying out for a living God, and when the yearning is so strong that we are willing to dispense with proof, and to reach out our inward hand humbly to take a gift from God, there is very little danger that any part of our life shall escape from our religion. We cannot take the mind and leave the heart in sin, nor can we take these two and leave the conduct of our daily life; and that complete sacrifice is what has value before God.

¶ Those Christians are blessed who need to leave their simple views of childhood's faith no more than the field-lark does her

[1] James Martineau.

nest—rising right over it to look at God's morning sun, and His wide, beautiful world, singing a clear, happy song, and then sinking straight down again to their heart's home. But those are not less blessed who, like the dove, lose their ark for a while, and return to it, having found no rest for the sole of their foot save there. They have a deeper experience within, and carry a higher and wider message to the world. The olive leaf in the mouth, plucked from the passing flood, is more than the song at coming daylight. It is as Paul's "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory," compared with the children's "Hosanna."[1]

¶ What, after all, is this "faith" which above all things we who have even a grain of it must desire to hold forth to others? "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." It is a power, not a mere belief; and power can be shown only in action, only in overcoming resistance. Power that shall lift us one by one above temptations, above cares, above selfishness; power that shall make all things new, and subdue all things unto itself; power by which loss is transmuted into gain, tribulation into rejoicing, death itself into the gate of everlasting life;—is not this the true meaning of faith?[2]

Yes, Master, when Thou comest Thou shalt find
A little faith on earth, if I am here!
Thou know'st how oft I turn to Thee my mind,
How sad I wait until Thy face appear!

Hast Thou not ploughed my thorny ground full sore,
And from it gathered many stones and sherds?
Plough, plough and harrow till it needs no more—
Then sow Thy mustard-seeds, and send Thy birds.

I love Thee, Lord; and if I yield to fears,
Nor trust with triumph that pale doubt defies,
Remember, Lord, 'tis nigh two thousand years,
And I have never seen Thee with mine eyes!

And when I lift them from the wondrous tale,
See, all about me hath so strange a show!
Is that Thy river running down the vale?
Is that Thy wind that through the pines doth blow?

[1] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 24.
[2] Caroline Emelia Stephen.

Could'st Thou right verily appear again,
The same who walked the paths of Palestine,
And here in England teach Thy trusting men
In church and field and house, with word and sign?

Here are but lilies, sparrows, and the rest!
My hands on some dear proof would light and stay!
But my heart sees John leaning on Thy breast,
And sends them forth to do what Thou doth say.[1]

[1] George MacDonald.

The Chief Purpose of the Gospel.

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THE CHIEF PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL.

Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.—John xx. 30, 31.

THESE words describe the chief purpose of the Gospel according to St. John, considered as a narrative of the life of Jesus. In their effect, though not by their position, they form the author's explanatory preface to the whole book, because they assert the reason why he wrote, and indicate the kind of result he anticipated for the readers of his work.

This text, then, is nothing less than St. John's own statement and summary of the object of his Gospel. We read the Gospels; page by page, verse by verse, we profit by their Divine teachings; but it is a blessed thought to have been told in one single verse the central intent why the last and most spiritual of them was written. That intent, the Evangelist tells us, was to produce in us a twofold conviction, and to enable us to enjoy the life which springs from its continuous power. The first conviction which he aims at forming in us is that Jesus is the Christ; the second, that Christ Jesus is the Son of God; and the fruit of that twofold conviction is the eternal life which is inspired by such a faith.

¶ The living testimony of one who has "seen and touched and handled," retains its unique charm and value across the flight of time. The custody of the museum at Bologna, in which are preserved the relics and trophies of the "Risorgimento," is committed to an old Garibaldian veteran, who loves his charges with a real fatherly love—the torn uniforms and rusted and battered swords, the little scraps of writing, stained and crumpled, proclamations, letters, sonnets. But, above all, he loves the relics of Ugo Bassi—the devoted Barnabite, who inspired this national

crusade as Peter the Hermit had fired men centuries before to fight the battles of Christendom. The priest who was content to stand apart from his fellows, and toil and suffer and die for the cause of Truth and Justice: the man whom the heroes of '48 revered and loved, as St. Francis of old had been revered and loved—almost like Christ Himself come down again. One may read in books, or one may hear from the lips of a young professor who has studied history more widely and scientifically, a fascinating account of the events of '48 and '49. But there comes a peculiar thrill, a peculiar feeling of real touch with the facts, when the relics of Ugo Bassi are shown by one who as a boy heard that voice ring out in the Piazza, and saw a whole city stirred, as the light of those wonderful eyes pierced through them, and they stood in the grip of a soul that spoke in face and gesture as well as in the music of audible appeal. The martyrdom has a new meaning for us, as such an one relates how he saw the wearied form drawn through the streets and out at the gate of Sant' Isaia amid the hated white uniforms; and heard the shots fired which proclaimed that the last agony was over. No; one who can say, "I saw, I touched, I handled," even after the lapse of many years, still draws us, still makes the past *live* for us as none other can.[1]

I.

The Omitted and the Recorded Signs.

St. John has recorded only a part of what he knows, and he has recorded this for a special purpose. He and his friends have lived through a great experience; they have been forced to consider what it really meant, and they have come to certain conclusions. Among all the events which passed under their eyes there were some that seemed specially significant. They were not merely events, they were signs; and that means that they had, as it were, two sides. On the one side something happened in the world of sight and sound—there was an historical occurrence. The Man Jesus did certain things in the world, just as Pontius Pilate the Governor, or Caiaphas the High Priest, or one of the Apostles themselves might have done. In a sense, of course, all such action has a significance, is, in some degree, a sign. Pilate, no doubt, has means of showing that what he does has

[1] Lonsdale Ragg, *Christ and Our Ideals*, 15.

behind it the force of the Roman Empire, which he represents. Perhaps Caiaphas revealed his high-priestly prerogative when, with the very last flicker of the old light that once shone upon the high priesthood, "he spake not of himself" of the necessity that one man should be sacrificed for the sake of the whole nation. Though the old gift was so sadly misused, it was still the High Priest in that predestined year who noted, cynically and brutally enough, the necessity of the sacrifice. And so Jesus did signs in the presence of His disciples, acts which carried meaning. Those who lived with Him gradually came to interpret these signs, and they drew from them the conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we have life in His Name. They commend their faith to others. It is their mission to go and make disciples throughout the world, and they use for the groundwork of their appeal not argument, not philosophical construction, but a recital of the events, which they had come to know as signs.

1. The signs of Jesus are largely unrecorded. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book." What is our first thought on being told this? Is it not this: Oh if we could only know them; if only they had been written down, what a priceless boon; they would be just what we most need, they would clear up so many points that are now tangled in dispute. For, indeed, the recorded doings and sayings of the Lord are so pitifully, so terribly, short—just a few rapid incidents thrown together in the Synoptics, mainly out of the very last year of His life—only twenty days of all His earthly career touched upon in St. John! How scanty, how partial, how unsatisfying! Was ever so tremendous a venture as the Christian creed made on so slight a foundation as this?

2. The unwritten is, and ever must be, more than the written. You cannot transcribe with pen all deeds and achievements, or tabulate the work of a life or even that of a year. Divine things cannot be compressed within the limits of a book. That which can be written can be circumscribed, and that which can be circumscribed has limits. Man looks for the unlimited, which may here be used for the infinite; and who would think of

cramming the infinite into a report? There are always the "many other signs which are not written" in all God's works and in all our works for God.

¶ In examining and preparing the statistical returns for the year I was much struck with the thought of the "unwritten." I looked at circuits where I know a pure Gospel has been preached and special services have been held, and yet I noticed that the number of those "admitted during the year" might be counted upon the fingers of my right hand. I am certain such a tabulation does not fully express the work or the fruit of a year. The other day I received a handbill as a specimen of "invisible printing." On it were two blank spaces. I was instructed to hold the bill to the fire, and legible type would appear in the "blanks." I acted upon the said instructions, and lo! there was the type perfectly readable. Brethren, in making up your returns I doubt not you mourned over the blank spaces; but when the record of our life and work shall be held up to the light and warmth of heaven we shall be cheered by seeing many a space "filled in" with the record of souls saved and saints succoured through our ministry. If all the signs of Christ's ministry are not written, let us not complain if some of ours remain unrecorded.[1]

3. We are not on the track of St. John's mind, when we begin by craving for an indefinite accumulation of Gospel material. He does not consider that that is what we need. He has another purpose in view, as he writes, than that of recording everything that he could recall or discover about our Lord, and this purpose of his is better served by a selection than by an accumulation, and therefore he spends his energy and experience not in gathering, but in sifting. His effort lies in singling out from the swarm of memories those special and typical moments which will best convey the impression he desires. How different from such a man as Papias in the later days, who had never seen the Lord, but would go about all over the world asking everywhere for some one who could tell him some new story about the Lord. That is not the Apostle, his long tarrying has taught him through the selective working of the Holy Spirit, under the pressure of daily circumstances what to keep in store, what to drop and prune, if the image of Christ is to transmit itself with faithful

[1] M. Brokenshire.

emphasis to those who are to come after. To secure this he depends, not on the quantity, but on the quality, of the matter chosen. We know, even in his own case, that the years as they pass over him have taught him the same lesson—to pare down rather than to expand. Fewer and fewer words, we are told by St. John, have become necessary to him; he would rather repeat and repeat those familiar phrases, into which he had concentrated all his love, than search about for other and more varied expressions.

¶ To get at the heart and the mind of a person we turn to the characteristic deeds and words which come from him at the most cardinal and critical moments of his life. We can afford to omit, forget, a thousand details if only we can single out and fasten upon those peculiar, those unique, expressions which have upon them the special stamp of his individuality. It is the typical facts that we require when the fullest secret of His being emerged and flashed. To know Him, then, at such vivid moments, is to know Him for ever, for it is to know Him as He is. A multitude of minor events and records would be full of interest, no doubt, but they would not be essential, they would not really add to our knowledge, they would but corroborate and confirm it. Take the case of a dear friend passed away from us in death. What is it that lives in our faithful memory of him, what is it we love to bring up in imagination and brood over and caress, as it were, with an affectionate recollection? Not, I think, a quantity of details, but rather, I think, the few singular and intimate and memorable characteristics which marked him out from all others, the things which gave him his personal uniqueness, the things which no one else could have done or said, the points at which his innermost nature shot up to the surface, and looked out at us with a sudden intensity, before it fell back again under the veil of ordinary existence. Certain single moments there have been that abide in our mind when he turned his face full upon us—the man himself; certain actions there were that stand out clear from all others as stars in the night. They may be great or little, but they were the windows through which we saw into his soul. Perhaps it is the ring of his voice on a certain phrase that will haunt us; or the turn of his head, as he looked back and smiled; his gait, as we caught sight of him some day, that we remember so well; or that way he had of laying his hand on our arm, and we can feel it warm there to-day; or the sort of word he used, that was a favourite one on his lips, the word that was the key to so much in him in which we delighted; or some one happy day,

when the blessed home was full of his delightful presence; or, above all, the tune of his laugh when he was merry, or the look in his eyes at the time of some deep sorrow—these are the things that we cling to, and to these and no more than these.[1]

4. But, besides the fact that a selection of signs is more impressive than an accumulation of them, there is another reason why St. John selects the few signs and omits the many. Because Jesus Christ is still alive and at work; Jesus Christ is a living Person, ascended to the right hand of God, reigning in the midst of His Church. He, through His Spirit, is here ready to meet difficulties as they arise, ready to answer the questions suggested by His words, ready to lead His believers on and on in the path on which they have set out. All the Christian religion lies in that; it lies in the actual communion between the living soul and the living Christ, not in reading about Him, not in hearing about Him, not in remembering things that He did, or being convinced that He really did them, or in admiration for His historical character, or in approving the excellence of His teaching, or in a touching sentiment from the beautiful drama once enacted by Him "who for us men, and for our salvation came down . . . and was made man"—not in any of these does the religion of Christ consist. It begins and ends wholly in an active and energetic contact between the Person of Jesus Christ and the person of His followers.

¶ If we have not the realized presence of Christ, nothing can bring us together; if we have it, nothing can keep us apart.[2]

¶ "Who is it that is passing by?" A personal presence? It is enigmatical enough; it is bewildering, it amazes, it says but few things plainly. But there it is; we cannot escape it; it is a presence which is not to be put by. That is its challenge: it stands there delivering the challenge by its sheer existence—not by arguments, not by explanation, not by persuasion. Not by those weapons does it make its attack; no, but by being simply what it is. "I am what I am, I am that which I have been telling you." "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" That is the voice that speaks through the written records, speaks as none other ever spoke. And it is the voice of a living man, not of a book, using a book through which to speak, but Himself the key of the written word, Himself the power in the book;

[1] H. Scott Holland. [2] *Charles A. Berry*, 127.

Himself the argument, the appeal; Himself the soul of the record! Though all the books that the world could contain were written about Him the situation would still be the same. At the close when you have read them all, the one question would still remain to be answered: "After all you have read, after all you have heard, will you follow Me? Will you obey Me? Will you trust Me? Will you put your soul in My hands?"[1]

II.

The Purpose of the Signs.

St. John tells that having selected certain signs for record he has written his Gospel for a purpose. The purpose is twofold: first, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ or Messiah and the Son of God; and then that, so believing, we may have life in His name. Let us consider (1) what we are to believe—that Jesus is the Christ, and that He is the Son of God; (2) how the signs enable us thus to believe; and (3) the effect of our belief—life in His name.

1. What does the Apostle, in writing this Gospel, want us to believe? He brings before us One Jesus, and he desires to prove that He is the Christ or promised Messiah and the Son of God.

(1) *Jesus.*—Who can narrate all that that name has been, all that it is, to those who have known it? "Jesus" is the subject of the four Gospels. Their one subject is the Life of Jesus. It is the Lord's human name; the name by which His mother called Him, when He lay as an infant in the manger cradle, when He played as a little child on the cottage floor of Nazareth; the name of Him who was the village carpenter; the name of

> Him who wont to stray
> A pilgrim on the world's highway,
> Oppressed by power, and mocked by pride,
> The Nazarene, the Crucified.

As we utter it we recall the scenes in the Synagogue and the Temple; the sermon on the hillside among the lilies of the field; the boat stirred gently by the silver ripples of the lake; the feeding of the multitudes as they sat in their many-coloured

[1] H. Scott Holland.

Eastern robes on the green grass; the woman sobbing at His feet and wiping them with the hairs of her head at the banquet of the Pharisee; the long night of prayer upon the lonely hill; the life as an excommunicated fugitive with a price upon His head; the madness of priests and scribes against the only human life ever lived of perfect love and sinless innocence; the fury of the mob; the last supper; the disciple who became the traitor; the agony in Gethsemane; the cross; the garden grave.

¶ The designation "Jesus" gives Him a place in the history of the world, allocates and identifies Him with men, and forms a useful starting-point for all inquiries concerning His character. At once we meet with Him on the plane of human life, in the midst of the known and the knowable, a man like ourselves, grafted on the stock of common humanity, and in most essential respects identical with us. His name was not an unfamiliar one at the beginning of the present era. There was nothing strange in it to the ears of His companions in the streets of Nazareth. Betokening Him through whom Jehovah sends salvation, it had passed into common circulation, and was often represented by the Greek Jason. In the list of seventy-two commissioners sent by Eleazer to Ptolemy, it is found twice. One of the books of the Apocrypha is attributed to Jesus the son of Sirach. A companion of St. Paul's at Rome was Jesus, surnamed Justus. According to St. Matthew the name was given to the Son of Mary because it fitly described the work He was destined to accomplish for men.

Certainly events have justified the prophecy uttered in the name. St. John regarded it, as appears from his First Epistle as well as from this Gospel, as fixing the real human personality of his Lord. It chronicled and reported the fact that He was made a little lower than the angels, that He had a manhood as veritable as our own. His name was not Gabriel or Michael, but Jesus—a common, human, historic name, fitting well the man whose place in the successions of the race of men it registers. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "He was made of a woman, made under the law." His human nature was real. There was nothing simulated or abridged about Him. He was the fulness of humanity in its depth and height, length and breadth. No one was ever more human than Jesus. Never was one so completely and thoroughly man as He![1]

(2) *Christ.*—The object of the Gospel was to teach us that this Jesus *was the Christ*—that is, the Anointed, the promised Messiah

[1] John Clifford, *The Christian Certainties*, 165.

of the Jews. As He is the strength of all the present, so was He the fulfilment of all the past. God, who loved His human children unto the end, loved them from the beginning. The Incarnation was no sudden thought; no second-best plan. It was the consummation of that love of God of which He had not left Himself without witness from the foundation of the world. We have an Old Testament as well as a New Testament. We are one in hope, one in promise with all the forefathers of our race. When men fell, the promise was given; when the Deluge came, it was renewed; it was confirmed to Abraham and to his sons; it gleamed through the thunder-smoke of Sinai; it brightened the *De profundis* of the Jewish people in the Psalms; it is the divinest tone in the grandest utterances of all the prophets. The object of the Evangelists in teaching that Jesus is the Christ is to convince us that this Son of man was the promised seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head; that He was the true rainbow of the Covenant; that in Him were all the nations of the world to be blessed; that He was the Prophet greater than Moses of whom Moses spoke; that He was the true Star of Jacob, the Sceptre of Israel; the King of David's line; the branch of the stem of Jesse; the oppressed and afflicted but not for Himself; the King upon His throne; the Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

¶ From the beginning of His ministry the Nazarene was familiar with the idea of His Messiahship as involving service and suffering, and gave no indistinct signs of the force with which it possessed Him. He is a true Hebrew in hope and faith. He reads the Law, sings the Psalms, and is fired by the Messiah hope. On His acceptance of the office of Scripture-reader in the synagogue of His native village He appropriated the Messianic words of Isaiah as descriptive of Himself. To the Samaritan woman He made known His character, and affirmed that He was the Messiah expected by the people; and such was the beauty of His life and the power of His words, that after He had been but two days in Sychar *many* said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."[1]

(3) *Son of God.*—We must advance one step further. Jesus is the Son of God. He who could claim to be in so supreme and

[1] John Clifford, *The Christian Certainties*, 174.

distinguishing a sense the Son of Man without deserving the charge of insanity or overweening self-conceit, and to be the Messiah, the anointed prophet-king of the Most High, without refutation from the cleverest and bitterest of His foes, need not hesitate to urge His right to be regarded as the Son of God. This is the fundamental fact in His consciousness. Directly and intuitively He knows His own Sonship, and speaks and acts by the final and supreme authority of that unique relation. We must, therefore, complete the synthesis of facts grouped in the words "Jesus" and "Christ" in another and higher designation: and what can that be but the Son of God the Father! The circumstances of the case demand and fully justify the triple name for the Galilean Teacher, our *Lord Jesus Christ.*

¶ When Jesus named Himself the Son of God before the religious Jews, the only interpretation they could put upon His words was, that He was setting Himself up as a rival God, "making himself equal with God." It is interesting and instructive to observe how Jesus passes by the word *equal*, in order that He may expound and dwell upon His perfect *filial unity* with His Father. He entirely disavows the equality in the sense in which the Jews meant it; and so St. Paul says of Him, that He did not think *equality with God* a thing to be grasped at. It was impossible to imagine a more complete subordination than that of the Son of God to the Father. Mark once more those wonderful sayings of Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." What language could more explicitly repudiate any independent equality of the Son with the Father? But then our Lord adds the assertion, "What things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Such a relation as this might not unnaturally be expressed by the term equality. But if we follow our blessed Lord's own teaching, we shall make sonship—sonship in its most perfect idea, eternal sonship—the key to what He was and is at the side of the Father. Jesus did not shrink from saying that it was the Father's purpose that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."[1]

They come to Thee, the halt, the maimed, the blind,
The devil-torn, the sick, the sore;
Thy heart their well of life they find,
Thine ear their open door.

[1] J. Ll. Davies, *The Manifestation of the Son of God*, 46

Ah! who can tell the joy in Palestine—
What smiles and tears of rescued throngs!
Their lees of life were turned to wine,
Their prayers to shouts and songs!

The story dear our wise men fable call,
Give paltry facts the mighty range;
To me it seems just what should fall,
And nothing very strange.

But were I deaf and lame and blind and sore,
I scarce would care for cure to ask;
Another prayer should haunt Thy door—
Set Thee a harder task.

If Thou art Christ, see here this heart of mine,
Torn, empty, moaning, and unblest!
Had ever heart more need of Thine,
If Thine indeed hath rest?

Thy word, Thy hand right soon did scare the bane
That in their bodies death did breed;
If Thou can'st cure my deeper pain,
Then art Thou Lord indeed.

2. Now, how do the signs which St. John has selected enable us to believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God?

(1) What is belief? There are two words in this Gospel which are very frequently used. The first is the word "believe," and the second the word "witness." Men are asked to believe in Jesus. "To those that believe" is the promise of the Gospel given. The writer does not say that the mystery of Jesus Christ is made manifest to the clever and the wise; he does not say that the secret of Jesus Christ is declared even to those who simply seek it; but he does say that it is made manifest to him who believes. That is the challenge which the Person of Jesus Christ still throws out. It is "whosoever believeth." That with us has become almost a cant phrase. It is an easy kind of thing to say in a sermon or at a revival meeting, but there is a meaning behind it, and we need to get back to the original and true meaning. To believe in Jesus Christ is to do something more than think about Him and to have an opinion concerning Him. It means to bow

before Him in reverence; to take Him at His word; to do His will; to begin walking in His way; to make the great surrender; to accept His teaching as though it were true, and prove it true by practising it. The man who so deals with Christ is the man who in the end finds out His secret and is able to say, "My Lord and my God." He then becomes a witness to His name. What he has found in Jesus Christ for himself, he is constrained to make known to others. "He believes and therefore also he speaks."

¶ It is sometimes asked, Why can I not be saved without faith? I answer, Look to this text and see the reason. Is a man saved who knows nothing of Christ and of God in Him, who indeed refuses this knowledge? It is an impossibility. Salvation lies in the very thing that you seek to get without it. Knowledge of Christ, likeness to Christ, sympathy with Christ: this is salvation; and how can it exist without knowing Him and believing in Him? Go and get health without wholeness, sanity without being sane, and fulness without being filled, and you may have salvation without faith, *i.e.* salvation without salvation. Faith makes all the difference between Heaven and Hell, not by a mere act of God's will, but by the very nature of the case. You must enter at this strait gate, if you are ever to enter at all; for there is only one Heaven, that where Christ is believed in, loved, and glorified; and you cannot think of any life for sinners there, which is not through His name.[1]

¶ Faith is no common word as the embodiment and expression of a Divine principle, and I do not think we have reached by far its lofty heights, or barely touched even the fringes of its sacred mantle, or caught the breath of its pure life, or felt the charm of its healing touch. I should like to be able to explain the full, deep meaning of this word, but I cannot. I look at it subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, it is God's gift to man and in man; yes, but it is more. It becomes a part of our best life, and a ruling, purifying part, for it controls and permeates the whole man. Do I err in suggesting that faith is the human counterpart, or that which answers in man, to omniscience in God? As omniscience is the eye of Deity, so faith is the eye of the soul; hence knowledge and life come by a look. God has no faith because He knows all things and needs it not; we do not know all, but the point or power in us which reaches nearest to the all-knowing is faith. Sight has limitations in the objective as well as

[1] John Cairns, *Christ the Morning Star*, 304.

in the subjective. Faith is limited in the subjective only—it has an infinite objective. Sight has to do solely with the material, faith with the spiritual. Sight is of the body, faith is of the soul.[1]

(2) How do the signs of Jesus produce faith in Him? St. John felt that the life of Christ had a perpetual value for men. The Lord Jesus was not an ordinary person, had not an ordinary career, and therefore ought not to have an ordinary fate. He was not a simple mortal with common relations to the past, and without any legacies for posterity; but One who gathered into Himself all the nobility and worth of preceding times as into a focus, and was fitted to become the fountain of strength and life for men through succeeding ages. The Son of Man had touched with His sympathetic hand and unrivalled powers the whole circle of human life, and invested every object therein with unfading beauty and exceeding grace. His "signs" spoke to the sorrows and griefs of men, and are eminently worthy of the opportunity of repeating their messages to the care-burdened heart as long as man may open his ears for words from the Unseen. His "sayings" contained truths so original, and yet so pertinent to all that concerns the true progress of man, that no age ought to be without their illuminating presence. His perfect goodness, embodying in the fullest degree the Christian idea of holiness which He had created, was such that it would have been an irreparable injury to have been bereft of the story which enshrined His portrait. The redemptive work He accomplished was so freighted with the best gifts of our heavenly Father to His erring children that to bring it into human literature, and make it contemporary with every age, was to set wide open the door of Heaven and lead men to walk therein; therefore these things were written, that men may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing they may have life in His name.

¶ John the Baptist having been in prison for several months, and becoming anxious concerning the establishment of the visible dominion of which he supposed he had been the pioneer, sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" The reply of Christ claimed the Messiah's office and character on incontestable grounds. "Tell John," said He, "My miracles are wrought

[1] M. Brokenshire.

amongst the poor in spirit and in goods. I give gladness to the desponding, and joy to the sad. I am the messenger of glad tidings to the people, and blessed is he who is not offended at the mode in which I work, or repulsed by the strongest evidences of my anointing of God."[1]

¶ In the Synoptic Gospels our Lord deals mainly with great moral and spiritual principles. He interprets the aim and inner meaning of the old law, deals with the nature of religion, and scarcely touches on His own personal claims. In St. John the prevailing subject is Himself, His relations to God, to His disciples, and to the unbelieving world. It is in St. John alone, for example, that we read of Christ's sayings, "I am the bread of life"; "the light of the world"; "the door"; "the good shepherd"; "the resurrection and the life"; "the true vine"; "the way, the truth, and the life." No reader fails to feel the difference. There is a difference also in the object of the miracles recorded. Not only is there in St. John's Gospel what Dr. Sanday calls "an enhancement of the miraculous," but their object is different. In St. John the miracle appears to be a manifestation of Divine power in order to induce belief, rather than, as in the others, a work of compassion, contingent on faith in the person healed.[2]

¶ Our Lord, during the three years of His ministry, had given extraordinary signs of omnipotence as credentials of His Divine mission. St. John makes a judicious and characteristic selection of seven of them, five of which are peculiar to his Gospel. He apparently designed to supplement the Synoptic Gospels by these additional supernatural details, although his main purpose throughout was to put in prominence the Divine side of the Person of Christ, "The Lamb of God." Note attentively the symbolic import of these seven "signs."

(1) At Cana He turned the water into wine, figuring to spiritual minds the transformation of the old and weak into the new and strong, the transfiguration of earthly things and relationships by the new spirit of grace.

(2) At Capernaum, Christ's power of life was declared, whilst the beauty and virtue of faith was illustrated in the nobleman who at the Saviour's word believed in his son's cure.

(3) The real perennial fount of life was further shown by the cure of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. The Father, the absolute soul, communicates all healing and life-giving powers

[1] John Clifford, *The Christian Certainties*, 175.

[2] J. M. Wilson, *The Origins and Aims of the Four Gospels*, 89.

to men by the Son, who is thus the proximate source. "As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

(4) By the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, Jesus manifested Himself to be the sustainer and nourisher of man's life. This miracle gives point to the pregnant words, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," and to His discourses upon the manna, the type and symbol of Himself, "the true bread which cometh down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall live for ever."

(5) The winds and waves, too, are here, as in the Synoptic Gospels, represented as obeying His nod. As the Lord of the forces of nature He treads upon the wings of the storm, to the consternation of His disciples.

(6) A man blind from birth who receives sight, to the delightful amazement of his friends and to the confusion of enemies, presents symbolically an illustrious concrete demonstration of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Giver of light, "the light of every man coming into the world."

(7) The raising of Lazarus, already in a state of putrefaction, fitly sets the Lord forth as "the resurrection and the life." Hear His own words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Again, "marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

The succession of these seven characteristic signs leads up to the crowning tragedy, and the Lord's own glorious victory over death.[1]

3. What, finally, is the ultimate effect of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? St. John's answer is, that we may have life in His name.

The name of Christ, of course, stands for the power of Christ. We express that even in our hymns.

> His name the sinner hears,
> And is from sin set free,
> 'Tis music in his ears,
> 'Tis life and victory.
> New songs shall now his lips employ,
> And dances his glad heart for joy.

[1] J. Miller, *Sermons Literary and Scientific*, 1st Ser., 20.

(1) It is worthy of notice that even the lowest kind of life, that which is merely physical and earthly, is helped by the history, example, and influence of Jesus Christ. He Himself blessed men's bodies, as a kind of image of, and preparation for, the deeper blessing He had in reserve for their souls. Now the Church continues this work and, though not armed with His power of miracle, is doing more at this day than ever was done before to preserve, enlarge, and bless the mere physical life of man. It is doing more than all other remedial agencies to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and to strike at the very roots of all the sins and vices which wear out life and induce decay and death. Take Christ away, out of the Gospels and out of the world, and you see how, as He goes out, death comes in. In heathen lands you light again the widow's pile, and restore infanticide; and nearer home you give a new license to intemperance and to lust; you break down the law of the Sabbath, and doom the millions to be ground in endless labour. You give a fresh lease to war, with no Christ-like face to come between the combatants and stay their fury. You urge on suicide by making life more miserable and less sacred. You introduce at every point some element of death, and your gospel is simply "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Such is the best hope of unbelief, such the millennium which secularism in its blindness and against its will is seeking to introduce.

¶ I ascribe my long life under God to my abstaining from the use of intoxicating liquors, and general observance of the laws of health. No doubt my habitual state of mind has had a great influence on my bodily health. My strong confidence in my God and the peace and joy I have felt, springing from an abiding evidence of my acceptance with Him, have tended to promote health and length of days.[1]

(2) But while Christ thus retrieves, conserves, and exalts the life that now is, His greatest blessing is the life that is spiritual, begun here and gloriously prolonged in the life to come. There is the life of *knowledge*, according to Christ's own words, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." There is the life

[1] C. Chiniquy, *Forty Years in the Church of Christ*, 476.

of *pardon*, where the condemned sinner receives a legal title to live, through the Lord our Righteousness. There is the life of *regeneration and sanctification*, whereby those who were dead in trespasses and sins rise with Christ and walk in newness of life. There is the life of *eternal blessedness*, which is the consummation of all the rest, according to the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

¶ I do not think we mark sufficiently the traces of autobiography in the sacred writers. The favourite word of St. John is "life." He dwells upon it more than on any other conception. And it seems to me that there is great appropriateness in the selection. To the men of his generation he was essentially the man of life. He had so much vitality about him that his contemporaries said he would never die. He says himself that if a man had in him the Spirit of Christ he would have in him the spirit of immortal youth, or what he calls Eternal Life. Where did he get that conception? From his own experience. He felt every morning as if he were born afresh into the world. He felt something within him like the springing up of living waters. Nay, he felt as if he had already passed the rubicon of death and had even now entered the world of the immortals. I think if you and I had met St. John the thing that would have impressed us above all other things would have been the vitality of his spirit. We see this manifestation exhibited in some of our fellow-men. There are those whom we describe as "full of life"; and if you ask the source of this life you will find that in every case it is originated by something outside. St. John says that in his case the flow of vitality came from the name of Jesus. The flow of vitality always comes from a human interest, and is generally awakened by a name. The names "liberty," "equality," "fraternity," stimulated the French Revolution—a vital force that shook the world. Many a heart has been vitalized by a name. You sit in a crowded drawing-room and hear a buzz of inarticulate voices. Suddenly, a voice not louder than the rest becomes articulate; it pronounces a name, a name you love. "Have you heard he is coming home?" Before that name broke upon your ear you were listless, apathetic, dead. But when you heard the prophecy of its owner's advent, a new life rose within you. The eye sparkled; the cheek mantled; the pulse quickened; the room became radiant; the languor vanished; the hours received wings. Even such to the beloved disciple was the mention of the name of Jesus. It made him young again—nay,

rather it kept him from ever growing old. It constituted him an evergreen; it gave him life eternal. It not only prolonged his years; it made them perpetual spring—elastic with energy, bounding with hope, buoyant with the promise of to-morrow. It retained within him the heart of a child.[1]

[1] G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, 73.

Love and Service.

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Love and Service.

So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.—John xxi. 15-17.

Who that takes any delight at all in the Bible does not take delight in the twenty-first chapter of St. John? Who has not felt the benignant spell of that narrative, in its indescribable simplicity and depth, its gracious beauty and its soul-penetrating power? Willingly we follow the last Apostle as he recounts to us, in his uttermost age, with the photographic precision of an old man's recollection of his prime, that wonderful memory. He leads us as if into the very landscape of the Syrian lake. We embark with him in the boat, as if we heard the rattle of the oars, and the lap of the ripples on the sides. We "ply the watery task" with him and his comrades, as if we saw the vernal stars reflected under our eyes in the dusky mirror of the deep. Their weariness and disappointment, as the night wanes and they have taken nothing, are as if our own. And then comes up the morning over the dark hills of Moab, and there stands a Figure on the solitary beach, and there are callings to and fro between beach and boat; and the nets are full and heavy on a sudden, and the disciple plunges into the water, to swim and wade to his master's feet. The whole group soon gathers round the fire of coals; the fast is broken; and then there is a colloquy about love, and labour, and martyrdom, and following. We have seen it, heard it, shared it all.

¶ It was my happiness a few years ago to set eyes upon the Lake of Galilee, gazing with strange emotions upon the waters and the mountain-shores from the garden of the Scottish Mission Hospital (scene of a noble work for God) at Tiberias, and afterwards from a boat, built probably on lines unaltered for two thousand years, and worked by fishermen, clad probably in the very fashion of the Apostles. Wonderful was the charm of the thought that this was indeed the scene of the Gospels; the eyes of the Son of Man knew just those outlines of cliff, and field, and shore, and that snowy dome of Hermon looking on from the northern horizon. His feet trod this shell-wrought strand, aye, and the waves too into which those smooth waters can be tossed so soon. Somewhere yonder, on the further side (for surely it was on that more solitary margin), this last scene of St. John's narrative was enacted; *there* was kindled the ruddy fire, *there* the water flashed into silver as Simon Peter wrestled his way through. Along that shore, whose line lies so distinct between lake and hills, he followed the steps of Jesus, and turned to see John following too. It was a moving thing to look thus with waking eyes on the region as it is. Yet, such is the power, the artless magic, of the narrative of the Apostle, that I know not whether the actual gain to realization was very great. The Gospel had created so visible a landscape that the eyes had less to add to the picture than I had hoped.[1]

1. **The occasion.**—The time is morning; morning so full of memories, so full of hope and high resolve. The mists are clearing from the lake and shore: the darkness is passing away, stirred by the fresh breeze of dawn. There are together those whose names are so often found associated; Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the two sons of Zebedee. They are on the sea of Tiberias, fishing just as before Christ called them to be fishers of men. The fruitless night-toil, and their success when in obedience to Christ they cast their net on the right side of the ship, were fitted to remind them of His former miracle, and of their former call. John marks, as significant of a difference between this and the former miracle, that for all the fishes were so many, yet did not the net break—a hopeful difference, promising that their new mission should be better than the old. Called anew to draw men to Christ, they shall be better preachers than they were; they shall

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *The Secret of the Presence*, 144.

not "catch men" for the Kingdom, they shall be enabled to bring them all in and retain them in the Kingdom. The months that have gone by, seemingly so fruitless—months during which they made so many blunders, months which appeared to come to so entire a close in the death of their Master—have not gone by for nothing. Their past experience, their blunders and anxieties and sorrows, all will be seen to have fitted them for their new work, when again the Lord shall bid them to it. This, at least, we shall see to be true of St. Peter; three times reminded of his weakness, three times made to feel the pains of penitence, he is each time bidden to tend the flock. He will be better able to tend the flock because of what he has learnt of his feebleness and folly.

¶ The narrative seems to me full of subtle suggestions. It illustrates our Christian life, which is ever new, yet ever old; full of strange events, the meaning of which becomes, as we muse upon them, familiar and intelligible. Every daybreak shows us the old world under new aspects; the objects which loom so strangely in the obscurity, we see, as we gaze on them, to be quite familiar. In the dim morning light, the disciples knew not that it was Jesus who stood on the shore; perhaps some mysterious change had passed upon Him in the grave, the risen Saviour not appearing quite like the Master whom they had followed; but the miracle revealed that it was He. It was a new call with which He presently bade them, but it was the fulfilment of His first bidding, "Follow me." It was a new miracle He wrought, a new experience through which they were passing now; but how thoroughly was it the same as what had gone before! It is this constant freshness and changeless identity of life, this novelty of circumstance having in it the old meaning of love and grace, the new duty which is but a repetition of the old call, which makes us rejoice in the one purpose we perceive ever enlarging and fulfilling itself. It is as we recognize, "I am the same, and God is the same amid all changes," that we rest amid ceaseless variation, and learn the lessons to which, day by day, God is opening our ears.[1]

2. **The language.**—The passage is marked in the original by a variety of language which does not appear in the English translation. There are two different Greek words for each of the English words "love," "know," and "feed," and three Greek words for "sheep" or "lambs." And there is significance in other words besides these. Take them separately—

[1] A. Mackennal, *Christ's Healing Touch*, 174.

(1) "Simon, Son of John." The Master's use of the old name "Simon," instead of the new name, "Peter," was suggestive of much. It was not to imply that he had forfeited all right to the new name; but it was a gentle reminder to him of the weakness which had led to his denial; and it would recall to him the Master's words *before* his fall, when He purposely abstained from giving him the name that implied firmness and strength, but used instead the old name, "Simon," which bore to "Peter" the same relation as "*Jacob*" (the "supplanter") bore to "*Israel*" (the "prince of God")—"Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Very lovingly had Jesus already assured the penitent disciple of His forgiveness. One of the first messages He sent as the Risen One was a message specially to Peter. One of the first private interviews He gave to any disciple was given to Peter; and from that interview he must have come away knowing himself to be a fully pardoned man. Still, the use of the old name here again must have gone to Peter's heart, making him think, with new shame and sorrow, of his old self-confidence and pride.

(2) "Lovest thou me?" The distinctions between the two Greek verbs used are various and delicate; but they may all be traced to the radical difference between them. It is not a difference in the warmth, but in the character, of affection. The one signifies the love based upon appreciation of another; the other simple personal attachment. The one word would express the love that would give itself up for another; the second word that which gives itself up to another. The one would be a confident, the other a confiding love. In this narrative the one might be represented if, in English, we said, "I am thy friend"; the other, if we said, "Thou art my friend." It is the former of these words that Christ here uses: "Simon, son of Jonas, esteemest thou me more, art thou more my friend, than thy fellow disciples?" This was just what Peter had professed, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."

We can now understand Peter's reply. Once he would have

said, "I know that I am Thy friend." Once he did assert his knowledge of himself against Christ's knowledge of him; he was sure he was to be trusted. But he has lost his self-confidence. He cannot compare himself with others now. He will not even assert himself to be a friend, ready to devote himself for Christ's sake; he will not profess esteem for Jesus. He chooses the humbler, trustful word: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

Again, Christ asks him, "If not more than these, yet art thou my friend at all? Is there any of the active devoted love in thee? any of the passion that will assert itself on my behalf?" And still the same humble, clinging answer comes from Peter. Even this he will not affirm. How can he profess what he is ready for? How can he be confident who has so painfully learnt that there is nothing for him but meekly and gratefully to trust in Jesus? "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

Now, Christ takes Peter's own word: He will not wound him by reminding him of his past boastful professions; let it be as Peter would have it, the trusting affection of the disciple. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?" Surely Jesus cannot doubt that. He must know that the disciple clings to his Lord. Christ must know that He is all in all to Peter. He saith unto Him, "Lord, thou knowest all things; Thou seest my heart, Thou knowest what sort of a man I was and am, how vain my self-confidence; Thou knowest me to be weak, rash, changeful; but Thou knowest, too, that under all my boasting, all my mistakes, there was love for Thee, and that it remains. Lord, Thou knowest that I cannot make professions, that I am heart-sick of professions, but Thou knowest that this is true; thou knowest that I love Thee."

And this confession Christ accepts; this confession He ever will accept. Distinguish between the profession of love to Christ and the confession of it. In profession the person most prominent in our thoughts is "I, who make it"; in confession, "He, whose name I am confessing." The confession of love to Christ is the sweetest language that can fall from human lips; it shows that the life has found its rest and meaning. Christ is known, and He will keep faithful to all eternity; He will solace in all tribulation,

and succour in all difficulty; He will guide with His counsel, and afterwards receive to glory, every meek soul that utters it. The profession of love to Christ is painful to hear. It is full of danger; it is boastful, self-confident. He who makes it will have, by many a sore trial, through many a bitter experience of failure, to come to a humbler mind. It is not in what we are to Christ, but in what Christ is to us, that our rest and security lie.

¶ Observe the period of Peter's life when this confession is made. It is not his earliest confession; he has been brought to it through painful self-knowledge; it is the utterance of a tried maturity. It is a custom among many Christians to demand this as a pass-word to Christian fellowship; to refuse the recognition of discipleship to all who cannot utter it. I cannot think that this is wise. To set young converts on an estimate of their feeling towards the Saviour, instead of encouraging them to trust in Him, is full of peril. Christian discipleship sometimes begins with love to Christ; and singularly blessed are they with whom it does. But in other ways souls are drawn to Christ: the weary go to Him for rest, the guilty for pardon, the helpless for succour; the dissatisfied, who long for a better life, seek the life that is in Christ. Such will say, "I trust in Christ," "I have found Christ," "I am following Christ"; but the words, perhaps, halt on their lips, "I love Christ." It is not for us to insist on their utterance. They are not for our ears, but for His. And He knows how, from the trusting, the obedient, and the earnest, to draw at length the full confession, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."[1]

(3) "Feed my lambs." There is variation in Christ's thrice repeated charge—"Feed my lambs," "Shepherd my sheep," "Feed my little sheep." All were to be cared for, and all modes of watchfulness and help were to be displayed. Fold as well as feed them; guide and guard and heal them; keep them from straying, strengthen the feeble, bind up the bruised, bring again that which is driven away, seek that which is lost.

3. **Three questions, three answers, and three commands.**—In this story St. Peter has been already three times the foremost. To him the Lord speaks, now not for the first time singling him out.

(1) The first question is, "Lovest thou me more than these?" These words refer to an earlier time, the time when He had said to

[1] A. Mackennal, *Christ's Healing Touch*, 178.

the disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," and St. Peter had replied, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Yet he had fled with the rest. And when he came back to the house where his Lord was being tried, he three times denied Him. Was this like loving Him more than the rest? Yet, again, his recent act might be looked at as a sign of his character, his leaping from the ship into the sea, and dragging the net alone. These words therefore did not convey a real reproach, but a lesson: the love might be the greatest, yet also the least to be trusted. There was a good beginning, but it had not ripened into its proper nature. St. Peter had learnt something by those humbling days. He answers "Yea"; he could do that unflinchingly; but he dares not claim to be above his brethren; he drops, in answering, all allusion to them. Christ simply replies, "Feed my lambs." He craved no personal cleaving to Himself, as man cleaves to man. He spoke only as the shepherd of the sheep, whose whole care was for the sheep for whom He had died. Such also must be the care of those who love Him. Henceforth St. Peter must show his love by his anxiety to sustain the life of other men; that was to be the test of his love.

(2) A second time Christ repeats the question; but now He needs not to recall the old boast; He leaves out the words, "more than these." He would ask, putting aside all comparison with others, "Canst thou say that thou lovest me?" The answer is the same as before—a full acknowledgment that He is Lord, a firm persuasion that his Lord knows him. Again Christ replies, slightly altering the expression, "Tend my sheep." Not only the lambs, the weak and ignorant, had to be fed, but even the strong and wise ones, the full-grown sheep, had to be ruled and guided. Mere pity for the helpless lambs was not enough. St. Peter must not think that there were any to whom he owed no duty.

(3) Once more Christ renews the question. Three times St. Peter had denied Him, and three times his love is to be proved. St. Peter's impatience breaks out. He thought it enough that Christ should try him once or at most twice. "He was grieved"; he exclaimed at the seeming needlessness of the question: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee"—Thou canst find out whether I love Thee or not. This is but a small

thing, a part of the Lord's all-embracing knowledge. But Christ will not let go the former command; He repeats, "Feed my sheep"; all alike need support as well as guidance.

¶ The reiteration in the interrogation did not express doubt as to the veracity of the answer, nor dissatisfaction with its terms; but it did express, and was meant to suggest to St. Peter and to the others, that the threefold denial needed to be obliterated by the threefold confession; and that every black mark that had been scored deep on the page by that denial needed to be covered over with the gilding or bright colouring of the triple acknowledgment. And so thrice having said, "I know him not!" Jesus, with a gracious violence, forced him to say thrice, "Thou knowest that I love thee."[1]

How pleasant to me thy deep-blue wave,
O Sea of Galilee!
For the glorious One who came to save
Hath often stood by thee.

Fair are the lakes in the land I love,
Where pine and heather grow:
But thou hast loveliness far above
What Nature can bestow.

It is not that the wild gazelle
Comes down to drink thy tide:
But He that was pierced to save from hell
Oft wander'd by thy side.

It is not that the fig-tree grows,
And palms, in thy soft air,
But that Sharon's fair and bleeding Rose
Once spread its fragrance there.

Graceful around thee the mountains meet,
Thou calm, reposing sea;
But ah, far more! the beautiful feet
Of Jesus walk'd o'er thee.

And was it beside this very sea
The new-risen Saviour said
Three times to Simon, "Lovest thou Me?
My lambs and sheep then feed"?

[1] A. Maclaren, *After the Resurrection*, 78.

O Saviour! gone to God's right hand!
Yet the same Saviour still,
Graved on Thy heart is this lovely strand,
And every fragrant hill.

Oh, give me, Lord, by this sacred wave,
Threefold Thy love divine,
That I may feed, till I find my grave,
Thy flock—both Thine and mine![1]

4. Thus Jesus thrice addressed the same question to St. Peter with apparently slight and yet significant variations. To that question he always received the same answer, only again with apparently slight modifications. And with equally slight changes the replies were followed up by seemingly the same injunctions. Yet, trifling as the variations appear to be—the questions slightly differing, the answers slightly differing, the counsels also slightly differing—there is a touching spiritual story in them, full of evangelical meaning and of deep spiritual interest.

The truths contained in the text are these—

I. Love is the Inspiration of Service.

II. Service is the Fulfilment of Love.

I.

Love as the Inspiration of Service.

Love, love to Christ, which is the one sure spring of love to men, is the foundation of service. It is the first condition of the Divine charge, and the second, and the third. It is the spirit of the new Covenant which burns not to consume but to purify. In the prospect of work for others or for ourselves we can always hear the one question in the stillness of our souls, "Lovest thou me?" Love may not, can not, be attained in its fulness at once; but the Person of Christ, if indeed we see Him as He is presented to us in the Gospels, will kindle that direct affection out of which it comes. If our hearts were less dull we could not study the changing scenes of His unchanging love, or attempt to describe them

[1] R. M. M'Cheyne.

to others, without answering the silent appeal which they make to us in St. Peter's words: *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;* yes, and still more those who are Thine and not mine, those who fall under my influence in the various relations of life, for Thy sake.

1. *Love is first and fundamental.*—How significant and beautiful it is that the only thing that Jesus Christ cares to ask about is the man's love! We might have expected: "Simon, son of Jonas, are you sorry for what you did? Simon, son of Jonas, will you promise never to do the like any more?" No. These things will come if the other thing is there: "Lovest thou me?" Jesus Christ desires from each of us, not obedience primarily, not repentance, not vows, not conduct, but a heart; and that being given, all the rest will follow. This is the distinguishing characteristic of Christian morality, that Jesus seeks first for the surrender of the affections, and believes, and is warranted in the belief, that if these are surrendered, all else will follow; and love being given, loyalty and service and repentance and hatred of self-will and of self-seeking will follow in her train.

¶ No other religion presents anything which resembles this invitation to give God the heart. Give me thy observances, says the God of Pharisaism. Give me thy personality, says the God of Hegel. Give me thy reason, says the God of Kant. It remains for the God of Jesus Christ to say, Give Me thine heart. He makes it the essence and the glory of His doctrine. With Him to give the heart to God is not merely an obligation of piety; it is its root, its beginning, its middle, its end.[1]

¶ "Lovest thou me?" It is a question that goes down very deep; for it goes down to the eternal springs of all life. It is God's and Nature's great secret; and man's only hope. Love is life, hatred is death. Love, in its essence, is attraction, combination, sympathy, blending. It is so even in what we call the unconscious world of matter. God's immense laboratory, the Universe, so far as we know it, is the ceaseless arena of love-attractions and blendings. There is never an atom that is content alone; never a molecule that is at rest in its isolation; never a crystal that is not flashed into form by aspiration; never a leaf or bud or blade of grass that does not reach out after its beloved; never a throb that is not responded to throughout all space. Gravitation itself

[1] Adolphe Monod.

is like the ceaseless infinite breathing of an all-pervading Lover—attracting all things to itself. Throughout the Universe, so far as we can penetrate, every atom is crying to every other, "Lovest thou me?" Science calls it "affinity." We might just as well call it "love."

Everywhere, too, Nature—the great patient Mother—stands waiting for the lover's appeal. It is true that we can capture many of her treasures without affection; but never her joys and benedictions so. She is very wonderful in her teachings, and very gracious in her consolations to her lovers; but there *must* be love if there is to be communion. You will only be miserable in her solitudes if you are without love. Night and day she whispers to the wanderer, "Lovest thou me?" Emerson was right. We get her stare—not her music—because we love her not. You accuse Nature of cruelty; you say,

> Nature has miscarried wholly
> Into failure, into folly.
> Alas! thine is the bankruptcy
> Blessed Nature so to see.

These young atheists

> Who invade our hills
> Love not the flower they pluck, and know it not,
> And all their botany is Latin names.
>
> The old men studied magic in the flowers,
> And human fortunes in astronomy,
> And an omnipotence in chemistry,
> Preferring things to names, for these were men,
> Were unitarians of the united world,
> And, wheresoever their clear eye-beams fell,
> They caught the footsteps of the Same. Our eyes
> Are armed, but we are strangers to the stars,
> And strangers to the mystic beast and bird,
> And strangers to the plant and to the mine.
> The injured elements say, "Not in us";
> And night and day, ocean and continent,
> Fire, plant and mineral say, "Not in us";
> And haughtily return us stare for stare.
> For we invade them impiously for gain,
> We devastate them unreligiously,
> And coldly ask their pottage, not their love.
> Therefore they shove us from them; yield to us
> Only what to our griping toil is due;

But the sweet affluence of love and song,
The rich results of the divine consents
Of man and earth, of world beloved and lover,
The nectar and ambrosia, are withheld;
And, in the midst of spoils and slaves, we thieves
And pirates of the universe, shut out
Daily to a more thin and outward rind,
Turn pale and starve.

We praise the "strong men," the empire-makers, the remorseless soldiers, the commercial pioneers; and, indeed, they have their mission, and some of them deserve their meed of praise; but these are not the great instruments of nature and of God. The poets, the artists, the moralists, the idealists, the Buddhas, the Christs, the lovers, are the saviours of the world.

"Lovest thou me?" is the question which determines every stage of evolution. From beast to man, and from the beast-man to the angel-man—all is a question of love. Until love comes, no high manhood comes, and, by so much as love lingers, the beast lingers. "Lovest thou me?" is the preliminary question which is the secret of that Divine Shekinah, that symbol of the Divine Presence—the Home. "Lovest thou me?" whispers about all the subsidences of family feuds, and tribal isolations, and clannish spite, and class pride, and national greed. It is the mightiest factor in true nation-making; it is the life and soul of sane and sober patriotism; it is the advance-guard, the evangel, of the great ideal—the Brotherhood of Man. In fine, it is that which determines all the upward evolutionary stages of the race.[1]

¶ In simple and homely ways see how true it is that love is life and joy and progress. It is nothing to accumulate treasure, and to surround yourself with splendid defences against the intrusions of the careworn world, if you have a loveless and careworn heart. There is profound truth in Hood's quaintly humorous but pathetically serious lines concerning

Love that sweetens sugarless tea,
And makes contentment and joy agree
With the coarsest boarding and bedding;
Love that no golden ties can attach,
But nestles under the humblest thatch,
And will fly away from an Emperor's match,
To dance at a Penny Wedding.[2]

¶ It is amazing to find how Christ simplifies religion and morality and reduces them to their elemental terms. He de-

[1] J. P. Hopps, *Sermons of Life and Love*, 7. [2] *Ibid.* 12.

liberately stakes everything on this single qualification. "Lovest thou me?" is His sole test for discipleship. It seems as if nothing else seriously mattered in His judgment, compared with this one master passion of the soul. "Lovest thou me?"—will there be any other question for us to answer at the last assize?[1]

What is the beginning? Love. What the course? Love still.
What is the goal? The goal is Love on the happy hill.
Is there nothing then but Love, search we sky or earth?
There is nothing out of Love hath perpetual worth:
All things flag but only Love, all things fail or flee;
There is nothing left but Love worthy you and me.[2]

¶ Let me take this as my Master's question to *myself*; and see how deep it goes, not only into my feelings, but into my life. For it is not, "Believest thou Me?" or "Understandest thou Me?" or "Confessest thou Me?" or "Obeyest thou Me?" or even, "Servest thou Me?" It goes closer home. It is, "*Lovest* thou Me?"; and all these other things may be where *love* is not. Again, He does not ask, "Lovest thou My word?" or "Lovest thou My work?" or "Lovest thou My brethren?" He asks, "Lovest thou *Me*?" And yet again, He does not ask, "Art thou in the company of those that love Me?" He will not let me shelter myself by losing myself in a crowd who all profess to love Him. He brings me out into the light, to stand alone, and asks, "Lovest *thou* Me?"[3]

2. *Love is a personal affection.*—From our own experience we know that love, as the best and utmost expression of our own personality, can find a worthy object only in another personality. No person can really love a thing. In easy-going speech a man talks of loving his family or his country. But it is never strictly true. What he really loves is each individual person belonging to his family or nation. There is no more difficulty in loving six than in loving two. But he can by no possibility love even one, unless that one be, like himself, a living person,—or at least potentially such, as is the new-born babe,—capable first of appreciating and then of reciprocating the self which, as with outstretched hands, a person offers when he loves. Nothing else, nothing less than this, is meant by Christ's doctrine of the love of God. Its true significance and expression are for ever found

[1] T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, 322. [2] C. G. Rossetti.
[3] G. H. Knight, *The Master's Questions to His Disciples*, 355.

in what St. Paul said concerning Christ Himself—"Who loved me and gave himself up for me." That Divine love should be thus truly focused, without mistake and without difficulty, in each individual human being, is the distinctive, wonderful, awful assertion of the Christian gospel alone of all the religions upon earth.

3. *Love is reciprocal.*—Jesus was not thinking only of Simon Peter when He asked him, "Lovest thou me?" He was as truly thinking of Himself, and He was revealing to His denying and yet true servant the longing his Lord and Master had for his love. Indeed, this yearning for a return of affection is of the essence of all true love. We cannot love any one very dearly without desiring that our love should find an answering response in the heart thus loved, and it is because Jesus loves His own disciples so deeply that He seeks for their love as the one sweet requital for His own to them. It is this longing of the loving heart for love that explains, in part at all events, the first great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." The love of God for man goes forth to seek the answering love of man for God; and the sin and guilt of a cold and loveless heart are never fully and rightly felt until we realize that want of love to God is not only an injury to ourselves, but is an injury done to God.

¶ Love that is centred in a personality can be satisfied with nothing less and nothing else than the reciprocating love of that person. On our own little human scale this is at once the glory and the tragedy of life. Its default is even more dreadful than death, as numberless poor pitiful suicides have testified. The old word is as true and tender, as fierce and insatiable as ever, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned." If, as we sit in peace and comfort at the sweetest feast, or the liveliest entertainment, or the most solemn service, a voice that we could not doubt whispered in our ear that the one we loved most felt towards us no love in return, then the poet would be bitterly, crushingly true who wrote—

> The night has a thousand eyes,
> And the day but one,
> Yet the light of a whole world dies
> With the setting sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one,
But the light of a whole life dies
If love be done.[1]

4. *Love is unselfish.*—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" I do not doubt your love. I did not doubt it even in the moment of your sad fall, but it was not that supreme affection to which I was entitled. You loved Me, but you really loved yourself better, and put your own desires before My will. Events, however, have been teaching you, experience has been leading you to truer views of Me and of yourself; tell Me now do you love Me? Is your love prepared now to sacrifice everything for Me, and in the event of others coming into a competition with Me, are you willing to give Me the preference, to yield to Me the first place in your heart? That is the only love Jesus can regard with complacence.

¶ A German mystic in the fifteenth century, John of Goch, thus stated the relation between love and self. "What wings are to a bird, love is to us. They seem to add weight to the body: in reality, however, they elevate it into the air. In like manner the yoke of love, when imposed upon our sensuous nature, not only does not weigh it down, but lifts the spirit with the senses to heavenly things. Take from them their wings, and you take from birds the power of flying. Even so, separate love from the will, and the will is made incapable of every act that transcends nature." Nevertheless how rarely we reckon those Christians to be in the front rank of the Church who are distinguished by nothing else except their immense power of affection. We still reserve the chief seats in our synagogues for the eloquent speakers, the munificent givers, the superior spiritual personages, who may fall far below others in simple, unwearying, self-forgetful tenderness.[2]

II.

Service as the Fulfilment of Love.

The presence or absence in us of the love of Christ is not only an index to our present state, but a prophecy of all that is to be. The love of Christ was that which enabled and impelled the

[1] F. Ballard, *Does it Matter what a Man Believes?* 76.
[2] T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, 320.

Apostles to live great and energetic lives. It was this simple affection which made a life of aggression and reformation possible to them. This gave them the right ideas and the sufficient impulse. And it is this affection which is open to us all and which equally now as at first impels to all good. Let the love of Christ possess any soul and that soul cannot avoid being a blessing to the world around. Christ scarcely needed to say to Peter, "Feed My sheep; be helpful to those for whom I died," because in time Peter must have seen that this was his calling. Love gives us sympathy and intelligence. Our conscience is enlightened by sympathy with the persons we love; through their desires, which we wish to gratify, we see higher aims than our own, aims which gradually become our own. And wherever the love of Christ exists, there sooner or later will the purposes of Christ be understood, His aims be accepted, His fervent desire and energetic endeavour for the highest spiritual condition of the race become energetic in us and carry us forward to all good.

1. *Service is the natural outlet of love.*—The right conduct of the life is a consequence and fruit of the Incarnation. Incarnation is a name for nothing at all unless it be the name not only of the historic event but also of a personal experience, the entry of the Divine into the human energies of the man who declares that he believes rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly to say that a man has the love of Christ is to say, in humaner and more concrete speech, that the Incarnation has been actualized in particular life, that Christ is born in him, that the power of the life from heaven has been poured into this channel.

¶ For him who would take on him the office of a pastor, the question is suggested, Why do you undertake the office? Is it from love of Christ, and from a sense of the obligation to show your gratitude for what He has done for you, in the way which He has commanded—namely, by services to His sheep? If any are actuated by lower motives they have reason to fear that they lie under the woe which, through the mouth of Ezekiel, God denounced against the shepherds who feed themselves and not the flock; who allow the flock to wander through the mountains, and on every high hill, and to be scattered on the face of the earth, while none searcheth or looketh after them.[1]

[1] G. Salmon, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, 55.

2. *Service is love's evidence.*—In giving St. Peter the charge, "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep," Christ was guarding him against a danger to which he was at this moment liable, the danger of sinking down into an indulgence of sentiment, of dwelling upon the words, "Thou knowest that I love thee," and forfeiting in this sweet humiliation his calling as an Apostle, and its prize. There is a subtle charm in self-humiliation, an ensnaring luxury of penitence. We feel it in a self-assertive world. From the blare of trumpets, from the strife for mastery, from the restlessness of ambition, and the constant temptation to self-seeking, how blessed to retire to self-abasement before the Lord; how sweetly then from lowly lips falls the confession, "Thou knowest that I love thee." To cherish this life alone is very dangerous. Hence comes the pride that apes humility; hence self-pleasing under the garb of lowliness. Worse than the hypocrisy which disfigures its countenance that it may appear unto men to fast is the subtle insincerity that disfigures itself that it may appear unto itself to fast. Christ sends St. Peter from confessing, as He sent Mary from adoring Him, to do His work. The world is the true sphere for lowliness; loving labour among others is the school of self-humiliation; love of Christ is perfected in the activities of a human sympathy.

¶ What Christ wants from me is a practical expression of my theoretical love, an expression in act, as well as on the lip; and though it may be a *hard*, it will always be a *blessed*, answer, if I can give it, "Lord, thou *seest* all things, Thou *seest* that I love Thee." And others ought to see it too. My love to Christ ought to be a visible love. Let me ask myself, therefore, what proofs of my love to Christ I am giving in my daily life. From my demeanour and conversation in my home would any one gather that I love my Lord and Saviour with an ardent love? If I never talk about Him as worthy of love, how can others believe that I regard Him so? If I never boldly take His part, when His laws are despised, or His authority is contemned; if I see, and do not rebuke, the sins that dishonour and grieve Him, how can I make good my profession of loyal love to Himself? If I never think of Him or speak of Him as a dear friend, who is gone away for a time, but is soon to come again; if my heart never thrills with joy in the hope of His "glorious appearing," so that I am setting everything in order to meet His eye, how can I prove my possession of that love to which separation is a sorrow? Do I make

my love to Him as plain and incontrovertible as He makes His love to me? I have never to ask *Him*, "Lovest Thou me?" If I did, He would answer in a moment, by pointing to the *proof* He gave of that, and say, "Behold my hands and my feet." He bears in His glorified body the "print of the nails," proofs of His wonderful love to me. But what a contrast between that love and mine! His so *strong*, and mine so weak; His so *changeless*, and mine so fickle; His so *active*, and mine so indolent; His so *open*, and mine so secret; His so *ardent*, and mine so cold![1]

3. *While service is for all, it is also for each.*—Let us recall the variety of words used—"lambs," "sheep." Under Divine Providence we have each a work to do for God, each a station and duties in the Divine society; some, sheep to feed, some, lambs to tend. The sheep must be fed individually—milk for the lambs and strong food for the sheep. One of the great intellectual pleasures of the ministry is preaching the same Gospel in many different ways; the boys' brigade wants it put in one way, the men's lecture in another, and the mothers' meeting in another.

(1) *The Lambs.*—No other book recognizes the place of children so fully or so kindly as the Bible. The great books of the world are somewhat deficient in this. Their writers have had no time, found no occasion to dwell on children, and, perhaps, sometimes have been afraid to do so. The Bible does deal with children because of the infinite love of God, and His knowledge of human destiny. Our Lord Jesus Christ set the child in the midst of the stormy disputers, and made him the type of entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. How can any deeper interest gather around their life and their claim than that which is poured upon them by the words of the Risen Christ, "Feed my lambs"?

¶ The Rev. Harry Venn has recorded this experience,—"The great danger is from surfeiting children with religious doctrines or over much talk. Doctrines they are too young to understand; and too frequent talking wearies them. Many parents err in expecting that the religion of a child should be the same as their own. I did not give mine formal instruction till they were eight years old, and then chiefly set before them the striking facts in the Old Testament, or the miracles in the New. I also laboured much to set before them the *goodness* of our God in things which they could understand, such as the comforts which we enjoyed

[1] G. H. Knight, *The Master's Questions to His Disciples*, 357.

together. Watching providential occurrences, I made use of them to give a body and substance to spiritual truth. One method used to affect them much—carrying them to see an afflicted child of God rejoicing in tribulation, and speaking of His love. To this day they tell of one and another whom they saw happy, though poor and in pain." [1]

¶ It is a beautiful tradition of the Jewish Rabbis that when Moses was a shepherd under Jethro in the land of Midian, a little lamb went frisking from the flock and strayed into the wilderness. Moses, full of the spirit which loveth all things—both man, and bird, and beast—and faithful in little deeds as well as in great, pursued the lamb over rocks and through briars, and after long hours of weary search recovered it; and when he had recovered it he laid it in his bosom, saying, "Little lamb, thou knowest not what is good for thee; trust me, thy shepherd, who will guide thee aright." And when God saw his tenderness, and the straying lamb, He said, "Thou shalt be a shepherd to My people Israel." [2]

(2) *The Sheep.*—"Feed my sheep" comes next; feed the middle-aged, the strong, the vigorous; they also need to be directed in their Christian course, and to be guided to some field of earnest service for Christ, therefore shepherdize them. Do not try to govern these, but feed them. They may have far more prudence, and they certainly have more experience, than you have, and therefore do not rule them, but remind them of the deep things of God, and deal out to them an abundance of consoling truth. There is that good old man, he is a father in Christ; he knew the Lord fifty years before you were born; he has some peculiarities, and in them you must let him take his own course, but still feed him. His taste will appreciate solid meat, he knows a field of tender grass when he gets into it; feed him, then, for his infirmities require it.

¶ Not to priests only is this said, but to every one of us also, who are also entrusted with a little flock. For do not despise it because it is a little flock. For "My Father," He saith, "hath pleasure in them." Each of us hath a sheep; let him lead that to the proper pastures.[3]

¶ We find the best interpretation of the three commands given by our Lord to St. Peter, by tracing their fulfilment in the

[1] *Memoir and Correspondence of Henry Venn*, 429.
[2] Dean Farrar. [3] St. Chrysostom.

Apostle's life. In the early chapters of the Acts we find St. Peter standing forth as the spokesman and leader of the Church; yet the doctrinal content of his sermons is extremely simple, just such as we should teach to little children: St. Peter was *feeding the lambs.* Then another Apostle comes to the front; the Church needs a more developed doctrine, for the lambs have grown into sheep and now require the "strong meat" of the Word; St. Paul feeds the sheep, St. Peter aids the work by *tending the sheep.* In the First Epistle of St. Peter we find him again the leading exponent of Christian doctrine: it is now a fully developed doctrine, a great advance upon the simple teaching of his early days; now, under the guidance of God, he is *feeding the sheep.*[1]

[1] H. O. Cavalier.

The Individuality of Duty.

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The Individuality of Duty.

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.—John xxi. 22.

1. This is the last recorded dialogue between Peter and Christ, and it has a special and a touching interest from the fact that it is so. How many and how varied these dialogues had been, and how rich and how vivid the instruction they contain! They form a magazine of truth in themselves, and had we no other fragments of Christ's life handed down to us than the narrative of His dealings with Peter, we should still have a tolerably full indication both of the doctrine He intends us to believe and of the duty He commands us to practise. And now the revelation was wound up, and the interviews themselves were to cease. Whatever further talk the Lord had with Peter, "something sealed the lips of the evangelist"; for with these words before us his record ends.

Could there be a more fitting and consistent close to the whole? It is the same Peter who speaks, tender-hearted and impulsive as ever, with a trace of the old leaven not yet purged. It is the same Christ, too, who answers him, true to the message and unaltered in the character He had revealed from the very first. "Follow me," He said three years before by the lakeside where Peter was plying his toils, unaware of the destiny that awaited him. And now, after all that had come and gone, when faith had been strengthened by experience, and the cord of love that had first drawn the heart after Christ had become a fast firm cable, wrought through long days of fellowship and common toil, there, at the self-same spot where Christ called His disciple before, He calls him again, reminding him, as He does so, that the omega of his life is the same as its alpha, even the duty of personal discipleship, the word "Follow me."

2. When Jesus had said "Follow me," Peter turned about and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following. At once he put

the question, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Christ's answer is our text.

Now it is not easy to determine with any certainty the spirit in which that question was asked, or the meaning of the answer it received. Some have imagined that Peter, fancying from Christ's silence regarding the beloved disciple, that *his* course would be free from those fiery troubles which had just been foretold for himself, inquired, with a kind of envious dissatisfaction, respecting the destiny of John. This explanation, however, seems incredible. We must remember that the thrice-repeated question, "Lovest thou me?" had only just thrilled on his ear, awakening solemn memories of his thrice-repeated denial. We must remember that Christ had suddenly revealed the future, and indicated a martyr's death as his lot in the day of his old age. We must bear in mind that Peter possessed that generous impulsive nature which would prompt a man under excitement to forget his own sorrows in unselfish devotion to his friends. And then, remembering that from the recent conversation with Christ, his heart must have been quivering with the emotions of love and sorrow, it is hard to conceive that one feeling of jealous discontent could have suggested this inquiry.

Most probably the question sprang from earnest anxiety regarding John's destiny. It may even be that Peter, having at length learned the glory of sharing the Saviour's cross, was concerned lest his brother disciple should not have the honour of following so closely in his Master's sufferings as himself. Mingled with that would be the anxious feeling which men of Peter's ardent and unselfish nature ever cherish regarding the future of a friend. It is easier for such impetuous souls to trust their own lot in God's hands than that of their brother; they can accept sorrow more calmly for themselves than view its advent for another. And in this spirit of unselfish devotion—rising even to restless curiosity regarding the Divine plan—it probably was that, gazing on the beloved disciple Peter forgot the picture of his own martyrdom in his solicitude for John.

3. Christ's answer contains three statements—

I. The duty of following Him lies on every one of us—"Follow thou me."

II. The manner of the following rests upon His will and our individuality—"If I will that he tarry till I come."

III. We are warned against needless curiosity or anxiety—"What is that to thee?"

I.

Following is for All.

"Follow thou me."

This is the Lord's command to each of His disciples. We have heard His voice saying "Come unto me," and now He says, "Follow thou me."

1. Notice how comprehensive is this command. It includes every other requirement and precept of the Gospel, and it calls into action every power and faculty of our renewed being.

(1) *It means follow with the heart.*—This is no mere external compliance, no mere outward conformity to our blessed Master's will. It is the service of the heart. The force that is brought to bear on the disciple is not that of compulsion, but of attraction. "*Draw* me, we will run after thee" (Cant. i. 4). No man can follow Christ whose heart has not been won by Him. "Whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient *from the heart* to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered" (Rom. vi. 17, R.V.). It is neither the terrors of the law nor the fear of a judgment to come that enables us to respond to this command. It is the attraction of Divine love that is the power. The Lord Himself must be the loadstone of our hearts.

¶ Every question was among some of his friends an open question. Strauss and Comte, Mill and Bentham, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Maurice appear as factors again and again in the discussions of that time. But nothing seems to have disturbed his balance; "his heart stood fast." His habit of obedience to his mother, and his intense affection for her, had insensibly passed into strict obedience to conscience. Perhaps one of the chief lessons of his early life is that this affectionate obedience is the soil in which faith flourishes.[1]

(2) *It means follow in faith.*—Following is often like stepping out on the unseen. It is often like walking on the water. We

[1] *Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury*, i. 54.

could never venture out without a Divine warrant. But He who granted it to Peter when He said "Come!" gives us the same warrant when through the darkness and the trial He says, "Follow thou me." This needs the courage of faith. Without faith we could not take a single step, for it is an impossible walk except to him that believeth. The stepping-stones of faith are the promises of God. "But supposing I have no faith," says one; "what am I to do?" Don't think of *believing* at all. Think of *Him* who bids you follow Him. Hearken to His voice. In other words, listen to His written Word: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17).

¶ Can you picture it at all? The church is built by the natives—walls of nipa palm spines, and thatched roof of palm leaves, floor of bark—two *doorways* on each side, and one at each end, and plenty of square openings for windows. We have no church members here yet, but we think of the Moffats, and feel encouraged. They were fifteen years working at one station and not one member, and yet she asked a friend to send her a communion service, and directly after it arrived they needed it.[1]

(3) *It means follow with the will.*—Our wills must be in this following, or it means nothing. All true obedience begins, not in the outward action, but in the inward spring of all activity; that is, in the will. We must *will* to do His will, if we would follow Christ. We become obedient *within*, before we are obedient in the outward act. The moment for action may not have arrived, but the time for willing to be obedient is always present.[2]

¶ The *wish* to disobey is already disobedience; and although at this time I was really doing a great many things I did not like, to please my parents, I have not now *one* self-approving thought or consolation in having done so, so much did its sullenness and maimedness pollute the meagre sacrifice.[3]

2. Notice how difficult it is. Against us are the efforts of our great spiritual adversary. He is constantly on the watch with a view to hindering God's children in their progress. But this, let us never forget, is not without God's permission. It is His will that our following of Him should be, not apart from obstacles, but in the midst of them, in spite of them.

[1] *James Chalmers*, 337.
[2] E. H. Hopkins.
[3] Ruskin, *Præterita*, i. 424.

¶ The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.[1]

(1) There are *alluring attractions* — earthly objects and pursuits that appeal to our natural inclinations. Some of them are perfectly harmless in themselves, but when they are yielded to, we discover afterwards that they have lowered our spiritual tone, and robbed us of our strength. And so we have been impeded in our progress.

¶ Progress is marked by stations left behind. If we follow Jesus, we go somewhere, which means leaving some place. Journeying with the breast to the East means with the back to the West. The disciples left their boats and nets when they followed Jesus. What has our following cost us? What selfish plans, worldly projects, doubtful amusements, dangerous companionships, are behind us for the King's and the kingdom's sake? We sing, "Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee," but another hymn brings the thought to a sharp point, "Have I left aught for Thee?"[2]

¶ "As for the pleasures of this Life, and outward Business, let that be upon the bye. Be above all these things, by Faith in Christ; and then you shall have the true use and comfort of them,—and not otherwise." How true is this; equal in its obsolete dialect, to the highest that man has yet attained to, in any dialect old or new![3]

(2) Then there are *perplexing problems.* — Perhaps we are troubled as we look around upon the sufferings of our fellow-creatures. We think of the multitudes living in darkness and degradation, not only in heathen lands, but in our own Christian England. We are unable to fathom the mysteries these questions suggest. Or, it may be, we are perplexed by the objections of sceptics to the truth of Holy Scripture. We are unable to find an answer to these things. What is the remedy? Look to the Master, who says, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." We must rest in His wisdom, we must confide in His faithfulness, and, without waiting to question or to speculate, we must be prompt in our obedience, and follow Him.

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World.*
[2] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 25.
[3] Carlyle, *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, ii. 136.

¶ All the great mysteries are simple as well as unfathomably deep; and they are common to all men. Every Christian feels them less or more.[1]

(3) Then there are *distracting cares*—the things that belong to the ordinary business of daily life. Some of these are very common matters, and perhaps very trivial, but God's children, when they carry them, find them a serious hindrance to their progress. It is quite possible to be so overburdened by care that we cease to follow Christ. We must learn the secret of *committing* all into His hands daily if we would know what it is to follow the Lord fully.[2]

¶ "Acts of obedience are not perfect, and therefore yield not perfect Grace. Faith, as an act, yields it not; but 'only' as it carries us into Him, who is our perfect rest and peace; in whom we are accounted of, and received by, the Father,—even as Christ Himself. This is our high calling. *Rest we here, and here only.*" Even so, my noble one! The noble soul will, one day, again come to understand these old words of yours.[3]

¶ There is a beautiful old tradition, done finely into verse by one of our poets, that, during the demon-raging fury of the Neronic persecution, Peter, visiting the harried flock at Rome, who nevertheless were undaunted in their brave stand for the Name of Christ, was one day waited upon by the threatened Christians, who urged him to leave the city of death, that he might continue, in less dangerous places, to carry on his apostolic work.

> Not in yon streaming shambles must thou die;
> We counsel, we entreat, we charge thee, fly!

The Apostle protests that his place is the place of danger, and that, come what may, in Rome he will remain. One by one they plead—for the sake of multitudes who will be as sheep without a shepherd, for the Kingdom's sake, for Christ's sake—that Peter, though for himself not caring, yet, as caring for others, may seek safety in flight. At last he yields—yields to their importunity. He goes forth, in the night-time, through the Capuan gate. Stealthily, swiftly, he pursued his way

> To the Campania glimmering wide and still,
> And strove to think he did his Master's will.

[1] *Memoir of John Duncan*, 403. [2] E. H. Hopkins.
[3] Carlyle, *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, iii. 190.

But he fights with pursuing doubts. Is his flight cowardice? or is it for the sake of longer-continued testimony? Is he still true to the voice which said, "Follow thou me"? Soon shall he have his answer. What is that vision of the night?

> Lo, on the darkness brake a wandering ray:
> A vision flashed along the Appian Way.
> Divinely in the pagan night it shone—
> A mournful Face—a Figure hurrying on—
> Though haggard and dishevelled, frail and worn,
> A King, of David's lineage, crowned with thorn.
> "Lord, whither farest?" Peter, wondering cried.
> "To Rome," said Christ, "to be re-crucified."
> Into the night the vision ebbed like breath;
> And Peter turned, and rushed on Rome and death.[1]

II.

The Manner of Following is for the Individual.

"If I will that he tarry till I come."

The first thought is that it is the duty of us all to follow; the second is that the manner of following rests upon His will and is made to suit our individuality. To the anxious Peter, Christ declared that John's course was to be different from his own. By the words, "What is that to thee," He emphatically indicated a distinction—implying by them that he should go his own way and leave his brother's cause in His hands. The one was to labour, the other to wait. The one was to preach the Gospel throughout the world, and be summoned to heaven by the sufferings of martyrdom, the other was to watch in long banishment the coming again of the unseen Saviour when the old economy should fall, and then in peaceful old age to pass to the eternal home. All this marked difference of destiny by which they were each to follow the Saviour is contained in the reply, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

1. Christ appoints a separate experience for each of His followers. "Lord, what shall this man do?" "What is that to

[1] T. F. Lockyer, *Seeking a Country*, 101.

thee?" No words could mark more emphatically the great difference which was henceforth to exist between the paths of those two men who had hitherto followed Christ side by side. They seem to express a kind of impassable solitude in which each man was to live. John could not lead the life of Peter; Peter could not fulfil the destiny of John. In different and lonely ways they were each to travel till the end should come. The life of Peter was to be action crowned by suffering, the life of John a patient waiting for the manifestation of Christ—*there*, in the difference between labouring and watching, lay the difference in their respective courses. Now, if we contemplate the distinctive characters of these two men, we shall find its Divine meaning. Each course was beautifully adapted to train their individual characters, and to fit them for their individual work.

¶ What could be more appropriate as a close to the life of Christ than such a picture as this, which opened out such a view of the Church's mission, as waiting and yet working, as suffering and yet serving? The great difficulty in the mind of Peter was how to reconcile the two, so that they might live and act harmoniously together. This difficulty was to be solved in course of time, when the days of trial and persecution came on the Church. Then it was seen that something more was needed than suffering and service; they would have to "tarry" or wait in patient expectation for the coming of Christ. In this way, the waiting spirit, the spirit of John, came to be more and more developed in the Church; and in proportion as it becomes developed, so ought the active spirit, the spirit of Peter, to make a corresponding advance. And thus the two sides of the Church's life will advance in harmonious union, until, by the discipline of suffering, and service, and patience, it is perfected in every part.[1]

2. The discovery of our own particular path is found in the revelation of His will which God makes to us. "If I will that he tarry." To follow Christ is, like Him, to obey whenever God's will is clear; to be patient like Him when it is dark. And this is a rule which applies to *all* circumstances, and one which can be obeyed in defiance of all results. There are circumstances to which no other law applies; under which no experiences of other men can help us. The only course at such times is to act at once under such light as we may possess. Do the duty that is nearest

[1] D. Merson, *Words of Life*, 223.

to you. Follow Christ in His perfect, unmurmuring obedience, and as you follow, a fuller light will come. It may be that your duty is not to act, but to be patient: if so, forget not that "they also serve who only stand and wait." And to follow Christ is to do God's will and challenge results. When that will is clear, we have no right to look at consequences. The command to Peter was a command to challenge all issues, although "another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not, *follow thou me.*"

There is one way for thee; but one; inform
Thyself of it; pursue it; one way each
Soul hath by which the Infinite in reach
Lieth before him; seek and ye shall find:
To each the way is plain; that way the wind
Points all the trees along; that way run down
Loud singing streams; that way pour on and on
A thousand headlands with their cataracts
Of toppling flowers; that way the sun enacts
His travel, and the moon and all the stars
Soar; and the tides move towards it; nothing bars
A man who goes the way that he should go;
That which comes soonest is the thing to do.
Thousand light-shadows in the rippling sand
Joy the true soul; the waves along the strand
Whiten beyond his eyes; the trees tossed back
Show him the sky; or, heaped upon his track
In a black wave, wind heaped, point onward still
His way, one way. O joy, joy, joy, to fill
The day with leagues! Go thy way, all things say,
Thou hast thy way to go, thou hast thy day
To live; thou hast thy need of thee to make
In the hearts of others; do thy thing; yes, slake
The world's great thirst for yet another man!
And be thou sure of this: no other can
Do for thee that appointed thee of God;
Not any light shall shine upon thy road
For other eyes;

. . . . . .

Thee the angel calls,
As he call others; and thy life to thee
Is precious as the greatest's life can be
To him; so live thy life and go thy way.[1]

[1] Richard Watson Dixon.

III.

Be Not Too Curious or Anxious.

"What is that to thee?"

In these words there seems to be conveyed to us a warning against unnecessary curiosity or anxiety about the lot of others, and in general about the providence of God. Peter's anxiety typifies the impertinence of curiosity, the impatience of ignorance, in things sacred, which has been the temptation of Christians in every age. The rebuke is the Master's protest against indulgence in this spirit. Energetic work in the present, not idle speculation about the future, is the parting charge which He gives to His chief disciple, and through Him to His whole Church so long as time shall be.

There are several occasions in the Gospel narrative on which a temper near akin to this was checked and corrected by our blessed Lord. Two of them are recorded in the thirteenth chapter of St. Luke. "Tell me not" (He would there say) "of those Galileans whom the cruel Pilate ordered to be massacred while they were engaged in sacrifice; or of those eighteen inhabitants of Jerusalem, upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, and slew them; tell me not of these, as though you would seek to pry into the judicial dealings of God's providence towards them; but look rather to yourselves, and be assured of this, that except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And again, "Ask me not, in a spirit of unprofitable curiosity, or of self-righteous estimate of your own condition, whether there be few, or many, who are to be saved; but ask this rather of your own consciences—are ye *striving* to enter in at the strait gate? for many, I say unto you, shall *seek* to enter in and shall not be able."

1. *Our Lord did not mean to arrest the spirit of legitimate inquiry.*—Curiosity is the parent of knowledge. Peter's question concerning the future reserved for his friend seems to have been prompted partly by affection, but partly also by curiosity. Both instincts belong to our essential human nature. When God created man, He breathed into him an inquiring spirit, and made

him eager to explore the mysterious world which spreads round about him, and to search out whatever things are hidden and unknown. Urged by this great impulse, the captains of adventure forced their way through forest and wilderness, and steered by the stars across an uncharted sea. And every lad who is worth his salt still tingles at times with the ancient longing to wander in strange lands, that he may discover for himself what treasures they conceal. It is the same imperious desire that has gathered the facts of science and framed the systems of philosophy. As Cudworth quaintly puts it: "The sons of Adam are now as busy as ever himself was, about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, shaking the boughs of it and scrambling for the fruit": and people who pride themselves on being neither philosophical nor scientific betray this elemental instinct of curiosity in double measure in regard to everything which is human or which deals with humanity.

¶ I am reminded, by one who was present, of a scene when some Americans were announced, seeking an interview, "What is it you want?" she [Jenny Lind] asked, standing very erect. "Oh, Madame Goldschmidt, we hoped to have the pleasure of seeing you, and making your acquaintance." "Well, here is my front!" Then (with a whisk round), "There is my back. Now" (with a deep curtsey) "you can go home, and say that you have seen me!" After her visitors had crept out abashed, she was very penitent for having been at all rude. But she could not endure any impertinent curiosity; and it was always a perilous experiment to introduce a stranger to her, lest she should suspect some motive in the introduction, when her coldness would be freezing.[1]

2. *Jesus did not desire to discourage sympathetic interest in the welfare of others.*—It would be strange indeed if He did, He, who in word and act preached the principle, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Yet it may be one thing to say, "What shall I do for this man?" and another, and a very different one, to ask, "What shall this man do?" In the first case, the question turns upon present duty, in the second it turns upon future events. The former word raises the thought of a responsibility that is mine, the latter intermeddles with a care which is really not mine, but God's. And in

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 23.

every such case, as we pass from what is practical to what is curious, and let the thoughts turn from the matters of personal duty to the mysteries of Divine administration, the Saviour refuses to lift the veil, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther. The secret things belong unto God, but the things that are revealed belong unto thee to do them. Askest thou, What shall this man do? What is that to thee? Follow thou ME."

¶ We are not to suppose that the doctrine of altruism is a gospel peculiar to the enlightenment of more modern times; there is a Christian altruism that is far more ennobling and radical than anything to which infidel ethics has given the name. Here, as elsewhere, the ideas with which it is hoped to supersede the Bible have been drawn from the Bible itself, as if the voice could be silenced by the echo, and the substance be banished by its own pallid shadow. We grant it all. But if the question be a question of what is spiritual, if it be a question between the keeping of your own soul unspotted on the one hand, and the doing of some imagined service for your neighbour on the other, then remember that Christ says, "What is that neighbour's state unto thee?" —what is it, that is to say, in these particular circumstances, under these particular conditions?—"Follow thou me!" Personal holiness is the main thing, personal discipleship, personal salvation. It is your first duty to save your soul, and that not for your own sake merely, but for the sake of a God who has given you the trust, and asks it back from your hands by a right which is peculiarly His own. Why do I say these things? Because there is a class of literature and of sentiment at the present day that exalts the doctrine of love and self-sacrifice towards our neighbour to the extent of attempting to enlist admiration when love and self-sacrifice lead to sin for his sake. No, in the matters that pertain to the soul, its welfare and safe-keeping, one's own cares come first. And to give them anything else than the first place is to become practical idolaters by the preference of a neighbour's claim to God's.[1]

¶ Men speak too much about the world. Each one of us here, let the world go how it will, and be victorious or not victorious, has he not a Life of his own to lead? One Life; a little gleam of Time between two Eternities; no second chance to us forevermore! It were well for *us* to live not as fools and simulacra, but as wise and realities. The world's being saved will not save us; nor the world's being lost destroy us. We should look

[1] W. A. Gray, *The Shadow of the Hand*, 149.

to ourselves: there is great merit here in the "duty of staying at home!" And on the whole, to say truth, I never heard of "worlds" being "saved" in any other way. That mania of saving worlds is itself a piece of the Eighteenth Century with its windy sentimentalism. Let us not follow it too far. For the saving of the *world* I will trust confidently to the Maker of the world; and look a little to my own saving, which I am more competent to![1]

¶ Thomas à Kempis tells us that

> If you could let men go their way,
> They would let you go yours;

and he adds:

We might have peace, great peace,
If we would not load ourselves with others' words and works,
And with what concerns us not.
How can he be long at rest
Who meddles in another's cares,
And looks for matters out of his own path,
And only now and then gathers his thoughts within him?[2]

3. *We must be concerned for others but we may be over-anxious.* —Some men, of ardent, energetic temperament, seem to have very exaggerated ideas of the extent of their responsibility. They seem to live only to keep all other people straight. No heresy can anywhere be broached, but they must rush to the front and expose it. No iniquity can anywhere be practised, but they must drag it into the light to condemn it. God made them keepers of their own vineyards, but they spend all their time in looking after other men's vines. Unquestionably there is something noble in this temper; but there is something quixotic too; and Christ seems here to teach that He imposes upon no man such a responsibility. The world is sadly full of evil, scepticism, infidelity, superstition, immorality, on every side. What, then, am I as a Christian to do? Simply to obey my Master's command, "Follow thou me,"—protest assuredly, where a protest must be made to clear oneself of all complicity with sin; protest where a protest is needed to save a brother, and to put a wrong-doer to shame; but before all that, be thou a true disciple, whoever may be false; be

[1] Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 163.
[2] Lord Avebury, *Peace and Happiness*, 342.

thou thyself a holy example of justice and mercy and purity and truth, though all the world should be only a sweltering mass of impiety, and impurity, and wrong."

¶ I was once sitting in a room where I had to wait for half an hour before a meeting, and by the fire was sitting a poorly clad, rather wretched-looking, old man, gently moaning at intervals. I asked him if anything was the matter, and he said, "No; I was only just thinking what a deal of trouble it takes to get the world right and to keep it right."[1]

¶ One man is a missionary perhaps in some foreign land; he is alone, one Christian among thousands of heathen, and he would fain know what will become of all these. Another is labouring single-handed as a parochial minister in the midst of a thronging town population whom his words never reach and never can reach; and he asks in dismay what shall be the end of all these. If he picks up one soul here and another there out of the seething mass of ignorance and vice, it is all that he can hope to do. To his faithless questioning the rebuke is addressed, "What is that to thee? Thou hast a work to do; thou hast a message to deliver. Thou knowest that thy message is truth, and because it is truth, therefore it is salvation. This is enough for thee. Execute thy task to the best of thy power, and leave the rest to Me."[2]

4. Peter's question is often the question of *vain speculation about the purposes of God.*—It cannot be otherwise than that His deep purposes should be hidden, for He is God, and His designs cannot be scanned and measured by human wisdom. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out," said one very near to the heart of God. So does He manifest His independence to the will and the counsel of His creatures. It is the glory of God to conceal His purposes. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" Such concealment is adapted to our condition. By it He trains us to submission; He promotes within us humility, He awakens us to constant ceaseless vigilance; He inspires diligence in our daily living; by gradually removing the cloud from His throne, He makes a constant revelation of truth. Well said Robinson, "There is a new light in God's word that is yet to

[1] *Sir Wilfrid Lawson*, 222.
[2] J. B. Lightfoot, *Ordination Addresses*, 165.

break out." Who knows all the mysteries contained in this volume? Eternity will not be long enough for the full development of all that was in God's thought, God's heart, when He inspired this Book. But still there are among us men who are curiosity-mongers about the purposes of God. They will have all God's depths to be shallows rather than confess their own inability to fathom all mysteries with their own reason.

¶ In my student days I had a very intimate friend, who was pre-eminently successful in gaining prizes by written competition. So surely as he went in for any particular subject, whether classics, philosophy, or mathematics, he came out first. In the general work of the classes and in the recitations he did not appear to be any better than his neighbours; but at a written examination he was "*facile princeps.*" At the end of our course I asked him to explain this to me, and he revealed his secret thus: "You take the questions in the paper as they come; hence, if the first question is a very hard one, you spend, perhaps, the whole time allotted for the paper upon that; but when I get a paper into my hand, I read over all the questions, pick out those that I see I can answer at once, and then having disposed of them, and made sure that they will count, I go on to the harder ones. I pass through the plain ones to the difficult, and I take care always to do the one before I attempt the other." There was great wisdom in the plan, and in the college of life more of us, I imagine, would come out prizemen at the last, if we were to let the hard things of speculation alone, at least until we have performed the plain duties which our Saviour has set before us. But if this be so with the "hard" things, how much more does it hold of those things which are insoluble by mere human reason. Yet how many there are among us who make difficulties, for the existence of which they are not responsible, and for the removal of which they are incompetent, a reason either for their refusing to follow Christ, or for following Him only afar off.[1]

(1) There are the mysteries of God's *Providence.* How often are we completely at our wits' end what to make of them. When we begin to inquire into the meaning of this or that occurrence, we get no reply. We meet with things that baffle explanation in our everyday life. The good are taken away, and the wicked left; strong men are cut down in the midst of their days and usefulness. We see communities visited with the most appalling

[1] W. M. Taylor, *The Limitations of Life*, 66.

calamities, young and innocent lives taken away in one fell disaster. We see the rising hope of a happy home laid low by the ravages of death, and the weak and feeble spared to a lingering old age. We can scarcely open a newspaper without reading of sufferings and fatalities that make the heart bleed. These things are mysteries to us. We try to explain them, but our explanations are often as perplexing as the mysteries themselves.

That old debate which waxed so hot between Job and his friends in the far land of Uz has emerged anew in some form or other in every individual heart and in every successive generation. It has never received fuller or more exhaustive treatment than it had at the hands of these Eastern sages. Yet virtually they left it where they found it. Jehovah appeared to them at the close asserting His sovereignty, and claiming His right to veil Himself in clouds and darkness. He asked them to confide in His wisdom, and to leave the matter in His hands. And what farther can we get than that? We are not responsible for the government of the world. It is not ours to sit upon the throne. We may well leave the vindication of God's workings to God Himself. He will take care of His own honour. Meanwhile for us there is the lowlier province of working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, under the assurance that "it is God who worketh in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure." To us the gospel has been preached, and for the use we make of that we shall be held to account. To us the Saviour has said, "Follow me," and for the answer we give to that earnest call we shall be responsible.

¶ The saintly Robert Leighton—sometime Bishop of Dunblane (of whom, as I am his unworthy successor in the Episcopate of that See, so I would wish to be indeed his follower, even as he was of Christ)—that holy Bishop has a sermon upon this text—preached before the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, November 14, in 1669—in which, speaking of the state of things as it existed in this country two hundred years ago, he exclaims: "Ah! my brethren, the body of religion is torn, and the soul of it expires, while we are striving about the hem of its garment." Alas! there is too much reason still for the same complaint. We are still far too much inclined to place speculation before practice, to place knowledge before virtue; to be curious about the future rather than to be careful for the present; to be inquisitive about others rather than to be well acquainted with ourselves. How

few of us are there, it is to be feared, who could appeal to God in those beautiful sentiments expressed in the 131st Psalm: "Lord, I am not high-minded; I have no proud looks; I do not exercise myself in great matters, or in things which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul and keep it low; like as a child that is weaned from his mother; yea, my soul is even as a weaned child." To say this, and to say it truly, would be indeed to *follow Christ*.[1]

¶ All that we can safely gather from his conversation at St. Helena is that his mind turns greatly on these questions of religion. He ponders and struggles. A remark which he lets fall at St. Helena explains probably his normal state of mind. "Only a fool," he says one day, "says that he will die without a confessor. There is so much that one does not know, that one cannot explain." And as he spoke of the mysteries of religion, we may speak of his frame of mind with regard to them. "There is so much that one does not know, that one cannot explain."[2]

(2) There are difficulties connected with *doctrines* of the faith, which rest upon unrevealed mysteries behind them. If we are perplexing ourselves with such things as the fall of man, the sin of the angels, the salvability of the heathen, the locality of heaven, and of the spirits in prison, the decrees of God that seem to destroy the free will of man, or that great problem that presses with equal force on the brain of the wisest philosopher and the heart of the little child, why God permitted the entrance of evil into the world at the first, and why He permits its dominion still; we can not only calm ourselves by the reflection that probably these are depths that no created mind can sound; but still more by the voice of our heavenly Lord, who does not explain any one of them, but says, "Leave mysteries to God, and do thou thine own work of following Me."

¶ I read Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Coleridge, Philip Van Artevelde, for views of man to meditate upon, instead of theological caricatures of humanity; and I go out into the country to *feel* God; dabble in chemistry, to feel awe of Him; read the life of Christ, to understand, love, and adore Him; and my experience is closing into this, that I turn with disgust from everything to Christ. I think I get glimpses into His mind, and I am sure that I love Him more and more. . . . A sublime

[1] C. Wordsworth, *Primary Witness to the Truth of the Gospel*, 166.
[2] Lord Rosebery, *Napoleon, the Last Phase*, 173.

feeling of a Presence comes upon me at times, which makes inward solitariness a trifle to talk about.[1]

¶ "As to what you may think of my beliefs I have no fear; they need not be discussed and they cannot be attacked."

"——But your church has its dogmas."

"There is not a dogma of my church that I have ever thought of for a moment—or of any other church."

"How can you remain in your church without either believing or disbelieving its dogmas?"

"My church is the altar of Christ and the House of God," replied Gabriella simply. "And so is any other church."

"And you believe in *them all*?" he asked in wondering admiration. "I believe in them all."[2]

I have a life with Christ to live,
  But, ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
  Of this and that book's date?

I have a life in Christ to live,
  I have a death in Christ to die;—
And must I wait, till science give
  All doubts a full reply?

Nay rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
  Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
  Take but the lowest seat,
And hear Thine awful voice repeat
In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet,
  Come unto Me, and rest:
  Believe Me, and be blest.[3]

(3) Then there are *mysteries in the future* that we should like to have cleared up. We should like to know the times and the seasons, and we are told that it is not for us to know the times and the seasons, which the Father has placed in His own hands. There are many questions respecting the life to come that press for an answer, such as the nature of the punishment in reserve for the wicked, the occupation of the redeemed, the appearance of the

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 152.
[2] James Lane Allen.
[3] John Campbell Shairp.

Saviour, the recognition of friends, and the nature of the intercourse in the next life. Regarding these questions, we are left in comparative ignorance, and so their solution cannot be of much practical importance. It is unimportant to know the nature of future punishment; but it is all-important to avoid it. It is unimportant to know the character of the heavenly state; but it is all-important to prepare for it. It might satisfy our curiosity to know if there will be recognition of friends in the next life; but it is of eternal moment to strive to enter in at the strait gate. A veil is drawn over these questions, and our prying into them can do no good. We have been told enough for the practical guidance of life, and whatever interferes with that should be let alone. What is it to us? Let us use to the full the knowledge that God has given us respecting the duties of the present, and the mysteries of the future will be cleared up in due time. Let us act up to our present light, and when we are in a position to benefit by more, more will be given. Meanwhile, let our desire be to follow Jesus; and as we follow Him the light will brighten, our vision will widen, until, amid clearer light than that of the sun, we shall read all mysteries plain, and know even as also we are known.

¶ The Archbishop was spending the day here, and preaching for me. After lunch we went into my study, and he let me talk to him. He was so exceedingly fatherly that day, that I was led on to talk to him about the great problems and mysteries of life, and told him of a certain matter which weighed upon me at times with an almost insupportable weight. It was connected with the hereafter. I may as well say it was the notion of *endlessness* of time. He listened patiently, and suggested certain lines of thought—and asked if I did not think Hegel's philosophy helped over such a matter.

Then I said, bluntly enough—"My Lord, have *you* never had any of these troubles? Don't *you* ever feel the mystery of that other life?"

He turned in his chair, put his hand up to his chin, looked at me a moment in his steady way, and then said—"Yes, I think I know what you mean. But I believe so entirely that God is my Father, and that He loves me, and that He will make me perfectly happy in the other life, that I never worry myself over what that life will be."[1]

[1] *Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ii. 655.

Experience bows a sweet contented face,
Still setting-to her seal that God is true:
Beneath the sun, she knows, is nothing new;
All things that go return with measured pace,
Winds, rivers, man's still recommencing race:—
While Hope beyond earth's circle strains her view,
Past sun and moon, and rain and rainbow too,
Enamoured of unseen eternal grace,
Experience saith, "My God doth all things well:"
And for the morrow taketh little care,
Such peace and patience garrison her soul:—
While Hope, who never yet hath eyed the goal,
With arms flung forth, and backward-floating hair,
Touches, embraces, hugs the invisible.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

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